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APRIL 2006

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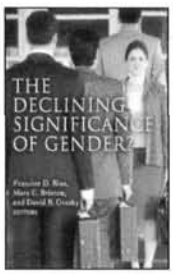
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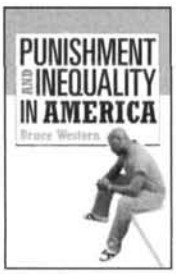
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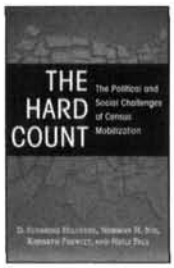
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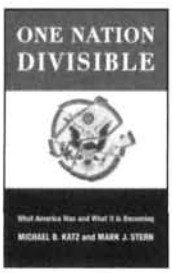
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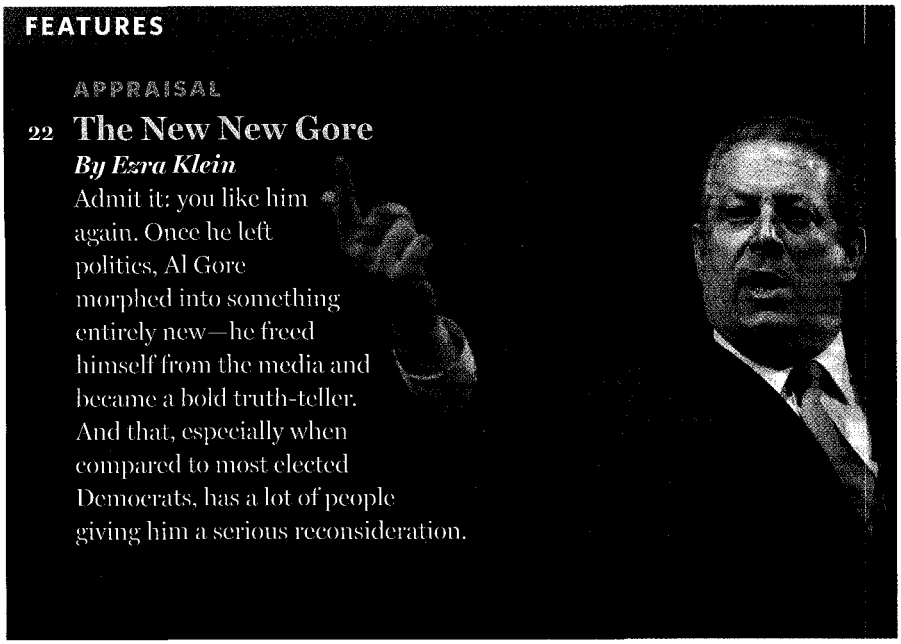
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LIBERAL INTELLIGENCE

"Things do not change, we change."

— HENRY DAVID THOREAU

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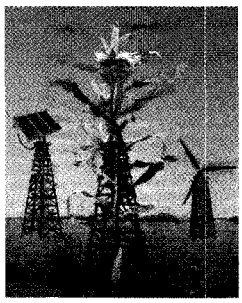
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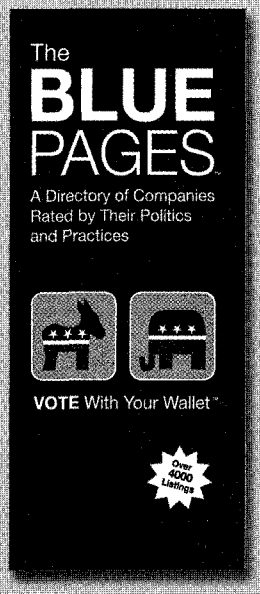
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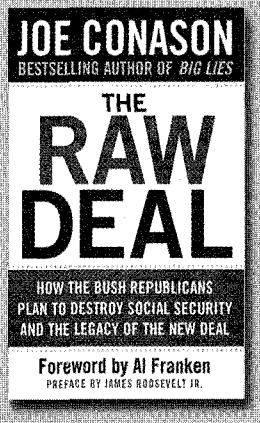
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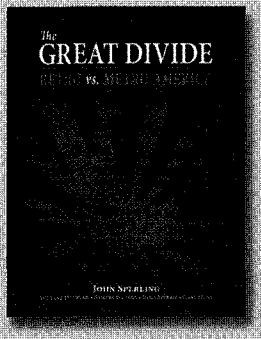
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Failures of Politics

WHEN HISTORIANS REVIEW THIS ERA, THEY WILL point to the striking failure of our political system to engage, much less remedy, the most pressing national problems. Consider a few key examples: The most notable economic fact is a 25-year decline in living standards of ordinary Americans during a period of rising productivity. As Paul Krugman noted, more than half the income lost by the bottom 80 percent since 1979 was captured by the top one-quarter of one percent. If democracy were working, this would be Topic A. Both parties would be competing to persuade voters that they were serious about raising living standards for regular Americans. Mostly, that issue is off the political radar screen.

Meanwhile, systems of employer-provided health care and pensions are collapsing, shifting risks and costs to individuals. Imagine—earnings, health care, and retirement security! If these are not of interest to ordinary voters, nothing is.

But even more dire political defaults loom. Despite Enron and the supposed remedy of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, America's vaunted capital markets are still the playground of insiders, not small investors. This failure squanders capital and courts systemic collapse.

Likewise, the chronic budget deficit is doing just what its sponsors intended—relentlessly battering down the public sector. The size of the public sector is a legitimate subject for political argument. But the need for responsible fiscal policies ought to be beyond dispute. Instead, it is beyond serious discussion.

American business is whistling past the graveyard as the trade imbalance grows and the economy depends on foreign capital inflows of more than $2 billion a day. There is no serious debate about how American democracy and our social protections should engage with the destabilizing effects of global commerce generally. Instead, elites provide misleading bromides about the glories of free trade, virtually inviting know-nothing backlash. With more space, I could add immigration, education, collapsing infrastructure, global warming, energy dependence, the grave disrepair of American democracy itself, and the epic failure of foreign policy.

Only the period before the Civil War and the closing decades of the 19th century displayed anything like a comparable political abdication. At other times, as in the Progressive Era, elites brokered top-down reforms. Alternatively, in the New Deal and civil rights era, bottom-up pressures moved enlightened politicians. The present era is notable for complete default.

Why the American political system is failing to address our most pressing national problems

One is tempted to blame it all on the recklessness of the Bush administration. But the roots go deeper. What is *not* the cause is the alleged extremism of both parties. This premise informs conventional pundit wisdom from David Broder on down. The contention, however, was demolished in *Off Center*, written by Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, who demonstrated that the Republican Party has moved far right while the Democrats have become ideologically centrist. The problem today is less partisan deadlock than one-party hegemony.

The two deeper problems are the abdication of financial elites who ordinarily look beyond narrow self-interest to the public good (or try to blend the two, as investment-banker statesmen once did); and of the Democratic Party. If there is a latent bottom-up constituency crying out for national leadership, too few Democrats want to energize it. In books by Democratic authors such as Gene Sperling, Matthew Miller, Robert Atkinson, et al, and you will find mostly small-bore ideas (in both senses of the word) that neither light populist fires nor find audiences for bipartisan elite reform.

Moderate Republicans, meanwhile, are AWOL. The Concord Coalition for fiscal discipline is a shadow of its former self. Advertised Republican revolts against George Bush keep fizzling, on everything from domestic spying to torture to official junk science and the packing of courts. Republican foreign-policy traditionalists, appalled as they are, have mostly followed Colin Powell's lead, and kept their critiques politely on background, perhaps out of concern for their corporate directorships and consulting deals. Powell and deficit-enabler Alan Greenspan are symbol and substance of elite abdication.

What next? As countries like Brazil painfully show, a nation can reconcile even wider extremes of inequality with a growing economy. Suffering can be internalized and depoliticized. Japan demonstrates that a society can function with a pseudo-democracy. Eventually, however, real problems become unsustainable. Yes, progressives might get to clean up after the next collapse. But how much better it would be if an outbreak of leadership re-politicized these latent issues, and devised remedies that served and energized ordinary Americans now. **TAP**

— ROBERT KUTTNER

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Abe, Still Honest

I AM SURPRISED THAT *THE American Prospect* would repeat the canard that Lincoln's suspension of habeas corpus infringed on "the liberties guaranteed by the Constitution" ["Bush v. Constitution," March 2006]. That document, in fact, explicitly states: "The Privilege of the Writ of Habeas Corpus shall not be suspended, unless when in Cases of Rebellion or Invasion the public Safety may require it." A case of rebellion surely existed. The only issue concerns where that statement was placed in our founding document; it is in Article I, which deals with the legislature. But Congress didn't sit in continuous session in those days. Lincoln had to act expeditiously. Subsequently, Congress ratified the president's action.

ROBERT L. MORRIS
Potomac, MD

Paul Starr responds: Mr. Morris seems to recognize that the Constitution did not give the president the authority to suspend habeas corpus unilaterally. That was the issue, even if Congress subsequently ratified Lincoln's action. And unilateral action by a president is again the issue today in George W. Bush's authorization of warrantless surveillance. Separation of powers is not a mere formality. Requiring the president to get legal authority from Congress or the courts is aimed at preventing infringements of our liberties. But of all the examples of wartime excesses that I mentioned, Lincoln's action was no doubt the least objectionable.

I'll gladly put up with [mail solicitations] for the sake of real political mail.

— **MIRIAM WEISS**
ASTORIA, NY

Government R Us

IN HIS ARTICLE "PRE-scription for Leadership" [March], Robert Kuttner recommends this 2006 election-year message for Democrats: "Republicans are not serious about governing." My opinion is that he has the right idea, but makes a mistake when he phrases it in the negative. The time is now for positive talk about the power of good government. The people gave self-anointed government haters the reins of power because they believed Republican propaganda and had trouble connecting the taxes they pay with the often indirect benefits they receive. With Medicare, disaster relief, science, international relations, national security, the economy, and—most of all—post-war Iraq, the folly of entrusting government to those determined to destroy it is now clear.

Instead of trying to be what they are not, Democrats should trumpet the need for good government—good as in efficient and fair, as well as good as in moral and authentically compassionate. What unites almost every Democrat is the belief that government has an indispensable role in society, and that its awesome power should be used to make our country and its citizens better and stronger. Democrats are the party of good government.

Republicans are the party of bad government. They failed to see 9-11 coming. Why? Because they hate government. They attacked the wrong enemy after 9-11. Why? Because they hate government. They made a mess of post-war Iraq. Why? Because they hate government. They sat by and watched as Katrina devastated New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. Why? Because they hate government. They created a confusing, dangerous and unfair Medicare prescription benefit and then botched its implementation. Why? Because they hate government. They have undermined public policy on science, education, and the environment. Why? Because they hate government. They have made "congressional ethics" an oxymoron. Why? Because they hate government.

If President Gore had been allowed to take his rightful place in the White House, trillions of taxpayer dollars, thousands of lives, and our reputation in the world would have been saved from Republican incompetence. Certainly Democrats have their own foibles and embarrassing stories to tell, but they have been out of power long enough to say sincerely that they have learned from past mistakes. Government isn't the solution to everything, but it is the solution to many things that are beyond the abilities of private parties or market forces, and when it is brought to bear, government power must be used faithfully, intelligently, and fairly.

HENRY RUDDLE
San Jose, CA

More Ricky

THANKS TO WILL BUNCH and *The American Prospect* for the fascinating and ultimately not surprising article on Rick Santorum's "charity." One more question—if the charity itself is not registered, I'm wondering if their fundraiser, Maria Diesel of Chester, PA, is registered. Since she appears to be a consultant, Pennsylvania does require registration. A quick look at the AG's database of fund-raising counsel/fund-raisers reveals no Maria Diesel. More sloppy housekeeping for Rick?

NANCY CARMICHAEL
Via e-mail

Will Bunch responds:
Dear Nancy—Looks like you've done some additional digging. That's an interesting point that I'm looking into, but as the charity's ex-treasurer, Barbara Bonfiglio, notes, she was apparently unaware of any of Pennsylvania's filing requirements. This new lead seems par for the course.

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Our Bad

I READ WITH GREAT interest the dispatch entitled "'Duke' of Deception" by Laura Rozen in the February issue of *The American Prospect*. However, about two-thirds of the way through the article, Ms. Rozen is providing some background on "the third alleged co-conspirator in the Cunningham plea agreement" and refers to a person named "Calvert." Typically, a person referenced in a news article by their first and last name initially and then by their last name throughout the rest of the article. I reread the dispatch three times and could not find a previous reference as to who "Calvert" is or what he does (did). If I'm correct, could you please issue a clarification in the next issue? Thank you.

Keep the "intelligence" coming. It's about the only information that gives me hope.

RUSS HALL
Albuquerque, NM

Clarification: Ken Calvert is a Republican congressman from California. We regret the error.

Likeminded?

I'M SORRY THAT WILLIAM Levinger would rather end his subscription than be tapped by the DNC [Correspondence, March]. I like *The American Prospect*, would love to continue receiving it, and rather enjoy getting mail from other progressive organizations. But the key word is "likeminded." I don't know whether it's because of TAP or some other publication, but I keep getting asked to subscribe to *Free Inquiry*, the atheist magazine. Is secular humanism the religious arm of political liberalism—are the fundamentalists right about that?

I hope not. I'm a devout Lutheran. I attend church at least once a week, and I serve as a member of the parish council, as a lector (I read the Bible from the lectern at worship) and as an intercessor (I write and deliver the prayers asking God to intervene in human needs). I also read the Bible privately, and start every day with the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer. I say this not to boast or to belittle anyone else's ethics, only to ask this question: Does this sound like a likely subscriber to *Free Inquiry*?

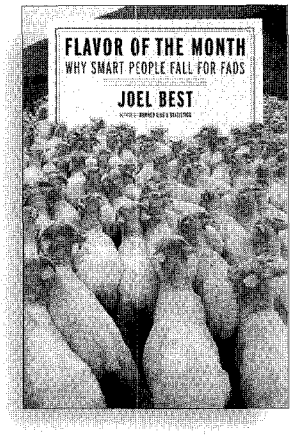
As I said, I don't know which subscription got me these mailings, but I'm sure they have resulted from my progressive politics. If I must have all or nothing, I'll gladly put up with them for the sake of the real political mail. But if TAP is to blame, I hope it will think again about what likemindedness is.

MIRIAM WEISS
Astoria, NY

Michael Tomasky responds: To Ms. Weiss, a sincere apology. She's right; "likeminded" wasn't the best word. A multitude of left-of-center organizations rent lists from one another—the practice is an important source of income and subscription-building. But it doesn't mean we agree on every single thing. And fear not, ma'am: We know what a lector is!

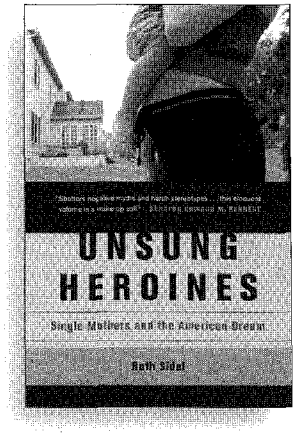
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Up Front



MELTED STEELE

REPUBLICANS HAD THE HIGHEST OF HOPES FOR THE candidate they recruited to seek retiring Democratic Senator Paul Sarbanes' seat: Maryland Lieutenant Governor Michael Steele. But since entering the race in October 2005, Steele has trailed the leading Democratic candidate, Representative Ben Cardin, in almost every public opinion poll, often by double digits.

And it's clear why: Steele has alienated audiences at nearly every turn. Speaking before a group of Jewish community leaders in February, Steele compared stem-cell research to Holocaust experiments on Jews. ("You of all folks know what happens when people decide they want to experiment on human beings, when they want to take your life and use it as a tool.") Then, as he tried to contain the political fallout, he told a conservative talk-radio show that, lo and behold, he supports embryonic stem-cell research after all.

Beyond this gaffe-athon, personnel disputes inside his camp are metastasizing. His campaign manager and communications director resigned in February, reportedly as another casualty of a growing dispute between the campaign's professional consultants and Steele's friends in Annapolis.

Steele, currently the highest-ranking elected black Republican in the country, was once thought to be the GOP's answer to Barack Obama. The trajectory of his campaign suggests he has more in common with Obama's '04 opponent—who also, as it happens, once ran for the same seat that Steele now seeks: Alan Keyes.

— ALEC OVEIS

GOO-GOO JACK

Amid all the juicy quotes about his contacts with top Republicans, it's easy to miss this rather remarkable line from Jack Abramoff's interview in *Vanity Fair*: "The exposure of my lobbying practice, the absurd amount of media coverage, and the focus—for the first time—on this sausage-making factory that we call Washington will ultimately help reform the system, or at least so I hope." Later he announced accepting a staff position at Common Cause, pending his release from prison.

Yes, that's a joke.

THE GOLDEN YEARS

Used to be that the media typically portrayed the elderly as kindly, wizened, worldly advice-givers. Turn on the TV nowadays, though, and you'll hear conservative pundits describing the soon-to-retire boomers as a horde of cranky, demanding barbarians sporting Depends and preparing to raid the country's entitlement programs. Our only possible defense: Deep cuts in Social Security and Medicare benefits.

So it was nice to see the Census Bureau's new study, "65+ in the United States, 2005," offering a rosier picture: In contrast to past generations, today's and tomorrow's elderly suffer from far fewer disabilities, are far healthier, and boast more wealth and education. In short, they're cheaper to treat and more self-sufficient than they used to be, and their budgetary impact won't be as devastating as once feared. The old days may have been good, but where the elderly are concerned, the coming ones will be better.

AND WE'RE METTERNICH

An AP-Ipsos poll from mid-March showed that 70 percent of Republicans—and nearly four out of five Americans—believe Iraq to be on the brink of civil war. They obviously missed **Donald Rumsfeld**'s stirring Senate testimony, delivered just days before the poll was released. Peppered with questions from Senator Robert Byrd about civil war, Rumsfeld issued the following definitive statement: "The plan is to prevent a civil war, and, to the extent that one were to occur, to have the Iraq security forces deal with it, to the extent they are able to." That clears that up. He also reassured the solons, as Fred Kaplan reported in *Slate*, that the administration's foreign policy is just like Harry Truman's and that it is building today's equivalents of the Marshall Plan, the World Bank, and NATO. We're not sure how we missed this (must've been the liberal media failing to report it), but we feel better.



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THE QUESTION: NIXON'S APPROVAL RATING HIT 24 PERCENT. HOW LOW CAN W'S GO?



"Keep praying, but it's unlikely. Bush's ratings among Republicans would not only have to dip below 70 percent—where they've never been—but below 60 percent."
— ***Ruy Teixeira**, writer/blogger*



"Bush's situation is more like Truman's during the 'Communism, Corruption, and Korea' days. I say he stays in the 30s through '06."
— ***Pat Buchanan**, American Conservative magazine*



"Theoretically, he can go down to zero. But that would assume that he lost his family. Frankly, I think he may have already lost Neil."
— ***Al Franken**, Air America host*

STILL REVAMPING ...
Surely we can also feel better about plans to reform the training system for Iraqi police: The March 9 *Los Angeles Times* reported that "U.S. officials have revamped and expanded training programs for Iraqi police units." Of course, a January 17 Associated Press story reported that "the United States is embarking on a revamped training program for Iraq's 80,000 police force." And way back on April 18, 2004, *The Boston Globe* reported that "U.S. officials have always cautioned that ... over time they hope to augment the three-week course in human rights given to new and re-hired police recruits."

THE AWFUL TRUTH
Each year, the State Department publishes an exhaustive report on human rights conditions in every country on the globe—except the United States. And each year for the last seven, the People's Republic of China has helpfully, and loudly, stepped in to fill that gap. Like clockwork, Beijing took to the offensive when the State Department released its new report on March 8. China's accusations of hypocrisy in response to the American charge that its "[p]rocedural and substantive measures to prevent torture were inadequate" were a bit more stinging than in past years. "To obtain intelligence from the captives, the CIA employed various kinds of torture ..." reads China's retaliatory report, "Human Rights Record of the United States in 2005." "The torture also included binding a prisoner to a board with plastic or paper wrapped over his face and water poured over him." If only we weren't giving them such good material.

OVERSIGHT OVERSIGHTS
Suddenly, and amusingly, "oversight" is the new watchword among Republicans facing a dire midterm election climate after years of determined lapdoggery on behalf of the Bush administration. House Majority Whip **Roy Blunt** commented in March: "If there was ever a good time for Congress to figure out oversight, it would be in the sixth year of a presidency." First year, sixth year—who's counting, really? Meanwhile, a White House spokeswoman nicely encapsulated the administration's outlook on congressional oversight and executive power in her March 8 statement endorsing Senate Republicans' "compromise" plan for monitoring the NSA spying program: "[W]e're committed to working with Congress on legislation to further codify into law the president's authority to intercept conversations between suspected al-Qaeda members who are calling into or out of the U.S." How generous of them! **TAP**



PARODY

Bill Bennett Forecasts the New Baseball Season

Bill (Sportin' Life) Bennett here. You know, here at the Book of Virtues Race 'n Sports Book, we don't usually give advice on any game of chance that does not involve a handle. But it's time for a new baseball season, and since baseball's mired in a drug scandal, and I once solved the nation's drug problem, I have some insight here.

AMERICAN LEAGUE



EAST: A staggering array of decadent East Coast enclaves. I see New York hired a centerfielder away from Boston. That's like Trotsky hiring a speechwriter away from Lenin. The pick here is **Tampa Bay**—good, solid, and, everywhere you look, a church the size of Machu Picchu.

CENTRAL: A travelogue of the corrupting effect of machine politics and organized labor. Cleveland. Chicago. Detroit. God help us. We're going with **Minnesota** because of that kid pitcher Johan Santana. I used to love Santana, back when I was not doing any drugs in the 1960s.

WEST: Can there be any doubt that the pick here is **Texas**? I expect a preemptive strike on those latte-sipping salmon-mongers in Seattle by Memorial Day.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

EAST: Holy Mother of God, what a mess. All that anti-human rap music in Atlanta is bad enough, but Philadelphia's here, and New York again! And, to top it all off, Washington itself! Quick—I need air! (*Editor's Note*: Bennett scrawled **Florida** on the sidewalk as he succumbed.)

CENTRAL: Most everyone is picking St. Louis, but I promised Ratzinger he was the last Cardinal I'd vote for. I'm thinking **Milwaukee**. I like the voucher program. It'll improve the math skills of poor kids to the point they can take advantage of my picks. Beats a welfare check.

WEST: San Francisco's out for any number of reasons. Los Angeles is only a little better, and what in hell are those hemp-puang hippies in Colorado doing with a baseball team? **San Diego**.

I see **Tampa Bay** and **Florida** emerging to play a fine, Sun Belt World Series, with the Marlins edging their neighbors out in six very competitive games. It's a lock. Vinny at the Sands told me so.

— *Charles Pierce*

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Big Bad John

BY MARK SCHMITT

LET ME BEGIN BY ADMITTING THAT IF FORTUNE decrees that the next president of the United States must be another conservative Republican, I'd certainly rather it be John McCain than George Allen, Tom Tancredo, Newt Gingrich, or most of the other current right-wing heartthrobs.

But have no illusions: McCain is a very conservative Republican who has now embarked on the project of reaffirming his position as the rightful heir to Barry Goldwater's politics as well as his Senate seat. Last month, for example, McCain voted to extend the very tax cuts that he had once voted against, a move that tax-cut strategist Larry Hunter correctly described to *The Washington Times* as "a further morphing of McCain into George W. Bush."

So, with this homecoming, we bring to an end one of the most fascinating eras in American politics: the five years during which McCain, with the help of an adoring press, essentially defined and controlled the concept of "bipartisanship." Consider that there have been two ways to get anything done since Bush became president: The the way of the Hastert Rule and the way of McCain. The Hastert Rule is an explicit operating principle of the House of Representatives that holds that nothing can reach the House floor unless it has support of a majority among Republicans alone. Combined with other practices, it has effectively ruled out most bipartisan deals and has rendered Democrats irrelevant.

The only exceptions to one-party rule have come from McCain, most notably with the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 and with last year's amendment banning torture. McCain's role in the unsuccessful deal on climate change is also worth noting. Bipartisanship has been a scarce resource in recent Congresses, and McCain effectively cornered the market.

This is—was—quite an achievement. With the possible exception of Henry Clay, "The Great Compromiser," has there ever been an American politician who has managed to hold and exercise informal power in this particular way? Back when I worked in the Senate, which sometimes seems as distant as the era of Clay, Webster, and Calhoun, there were always multiple senators and representatives who were likely to be involved in any bipartisan deal. Republican senators like Senators John Chafee, John Danforth, and Dave Durenberger were sure to find seats at any bipartisan table, and even conservatives like Pete Domenici of New Mexico could be brought into coalitions, such as his alliance with Paul Wellstone on mental health. Because there were enough such wheeler-dealers among Republicans, they formed shifting alliances, and no individual senator could consistently make or break the deal.

But those Republicans either retired or, like Domenici, have elected to play a reliably partisan role. That left McCain alone as the broker of bipartisanship. And it's a role he has guarded jealously. Recall McCain's recent slashing attack on Barack Obama as "partisan" for choosing to pursue ethics reform through the regular committee process in the Senate rather than an ad hoc task force created by McCain. He couldn't stomach someone pursuing a bipartisan deal that wasn't his own.

McCain's monopoly on bipartisanship, and the one-party rule that prevails otherwise, have been mutually interdependent phenomena. If actual opportunities for bipartisanship were not so limited, McCain would have much less power. At the same time, McCain provides a kind of safety valve for the natural pressures that would resist one-party control, letting out just enough pressure so that a political arrangement that perpetually seems unsustainable manages to hold on.

The unique role McCain has created self-evidently serves his own political purposes, supporting the impression that he is a figure who transcends party and ideology, an image that he presumably hopes is implanted strongly enough in the public mind that it will survive all the acts of obeisance demanded by the gatekeepers of his party's nomination.

But it has also served the political purposes of the Bush administration to have the only exceptions to its command-and-control structure pass through a single person, and one who is on a short leash because of his presidential ambitions. When Bush, on signing the torture ban, issued a statement saying that he intended to ignore it, McCain meekly promised to "monitor the administration's implementation" of the law.

It's time to start telling the truth about how John McCain's alleged bipartisanship helps Bush.

If there had been no McCain, perhaps there would be no campaign-finance law, no torture amendment, no progress toward action on climate change. So for all that, we should be modestly grateful. But I suspect that the Bushies signing on to McCain's campaign understand exactly how helpful his monopoly on bipartisanship has been to their sustained control, and are grateful in their own way. TAP

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The Conscience Clause

BY JAANA GOODRICH

WE LIBERALS HAVE A LOT ON OUR CONSCIENCES. Who taught the right wing how to use religion for social causes during the Martin Luther King era? Who showed them that discrimination on the basis of race or sex was not something most Americans see as part of the generous bounty of this country? It was us, and now we reap the harvest of all these past successes: The Christian right has stolen our toolkit and is busily using it to demolish the human rights we so laboriously built. They tell us that religious people are the real victims of discrimination and they tell us that what really oppresses them is ... human rights. Who would have thought.

The human rights the Christian right deplores most are women's reproductive rights. These rights oppress pro-life pharmacists all across the country, pharmacists who have decided to believe that the contraceptive pill, including its stronger "Morning After" or Plan B form, amounts to the killing of unborn babies. These pharmacists have no desire to fill such prescriptions that would do that, even if the prescription is for the treatment of some malady quite unrelated to birth control.

Lucky for them, someone is looking out for their rights: Legislators in several states have proposed bills that would protect the rights of a pro-life pharmacist—even one wishing to deny a customer her emergency contraceptive pills late at night in some solitary rural pharmacy when there are no other routes to obtain them—by instituting lefty-sounding "Health Care Workers' Rights" or "Pharmacist Conscience Clauses." What these laws would protect is not just the workers' tender consciences but also their right to not work and to not get disciplined for such refusals. We should all be so lucky.

Take the bill proposed for the protection of pro-life pharmacists in the state of Missouri. Among other goodies, it promises that pharmacists will be protected against discrimination: "Employers cannot refuse to hire, discriminate against, segregate, or terminate a pharmaceutical professional because of their opposition to any service involving a particular drug or device that they have a good faith belief is used for abortions."

See what I mean about the right having stolen our toolkit? They have taken "discrimination," and they are using it all wrong. If I refuse to hire a pharmacist just because that person is black or female or a Unitarian, I am discriminating in the legal sense because all these characteristics are irrelevant from the point of view of what pharmacists are expected to do. What is not irrelevant is whether the pharmacist will actually *do* the job I'm trying to fill, and yet this is exactly what the right-wing Christians are arguing. "Discrimination" has had the usual fate of terms stolen by the right wing: Its meaning has been turned on its head.

The Missouri bill doesn't just privilege the consciences of pharmacists over the still legally protected reproductive rights of women. Although it is careful to limit the conscience clause to qualms about abortion, the problem it reflects is more general: The ethical values of a worker are given priority, even when these values interfere with the perfectly legal job the worker has been hired for and even when the refusal to dispense a medication may result in serious harm to the patients the pharmacy is paid to serve. Christian Scientists don't believe in conventional medical care. Could a Christian Scientist work as a pharmacist somewhere in this country, spending day after day refusing to dispense anything at all, and yet cashing in a salary every month? It is beginning to look like a real possibility.

In the meantime, I am going to apply for a job behind the deli counter at my local supermarket. The job fits me like a glove because I'm a fanatic Buddhist vegetarian and I will enjoy educating and enlightening the customers. I will also refuse to fill any orders for ham sandwiches or chicken breasts or meatball heroes, because eating meat is wrong and sinful, and I will spend a lot of time filing my nails while the other workers take over. I expect not to be fired, because it would be discrimination against my religious and ethical principles.

If anti-abortion pharmacists merit protection, then why not vegetarian workers at the deli counter?

Sadly, such a scenario will not come about because it is not about regulating women's fertility. That is, after all, the real reason for the conscience clauses: The Uterus Wars. If you wish to convince me otherwise show me the case where a pharmacist's conscience left a customer's Viagra prescription unfilled or the packet of condoms on the counter. Not gonna happen. **TAP**

***Jaana Goodrich** is a recovering economist and the sole proprietor of the political blog Echidne of the Snakes.*

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"Mexico is Becoming the Next Colombia"

By Ted Galen Carpenter of the CATO Institute

Executive Summary

Mexico is a major source of heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine for the U.S. market as well as the principal transit and distribution point for cocaine coming in from South America. For years, people both inside and outside Mexico have worried that the country might descend into the maelstrom of corruption and violence that has long plagued the chief drug-source country in the Western Hemisphere, Colombia. There are growing signs that the "Colombianization" of Mexico is now becoming a reality.

That tragic prospect is a direct result of Washington's policy of drug prohibition. A prohibitionist strategy inherently creates a huge black-market premium for trafficking in illegal drugs. The enormous potential profit also attracts the most violence-prone criminal elements. It is a truism that when drugs are outlawed, only outlaws will traffic in drugs.

If Mexico goes down the same path as Colombia, the consequences for the United States will be much more severe. Colombia is relatively far away, but Mexico shares a border with the United States and is closely linked to this country through the North America Free Trade Agreement. Chaos in Mexico is already spilling over the border and will adversely impact the United States – especially the southwestern states.

There is still time for Mexico to halt and eventually reverse the Colombianization process, but for that to occur Washington must make dramatic policy changes. For more than three and a half decades, the United States has pursued a vigorous war on drugs that has produced major social pathologies both here and abroad. It is time to rethink the entire prohibitionist strategy.

(Continued at: http://www.cato.org/pubs/fpbriefs/fpb87.pdf)

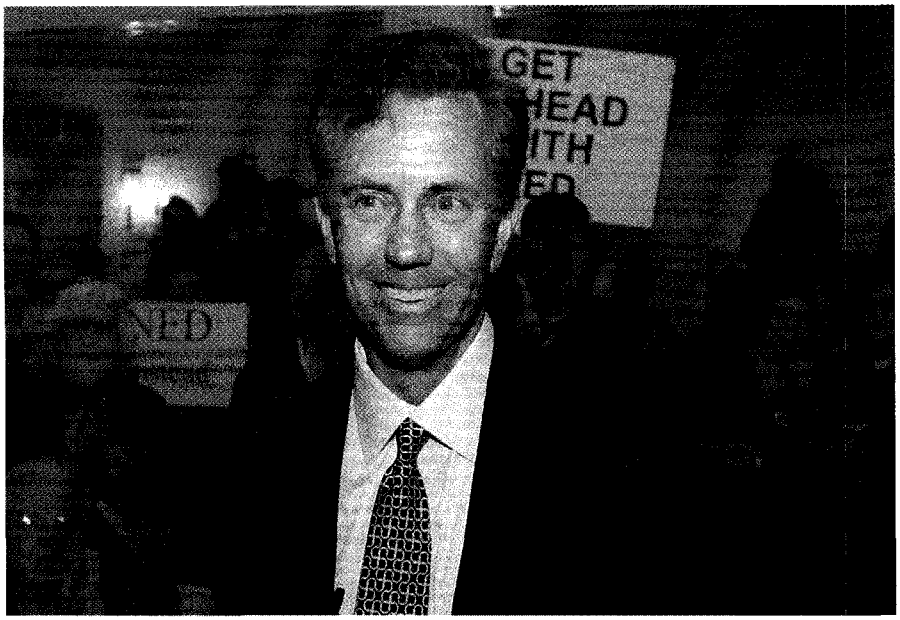
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Dispatches

"The current climate has prompted Americans for the UN Population Fund to put a planned trip to Nicaragua on hold ... ."

— PAGE 13



Talk to Mr. Ned: Lamont is a long shot, but he has some Nutmeg Staters cheering.

THE DEMOCRATS

THE ANTI-JOE

Ned Lamont found just the man to take on Joe Lieberman: himself.

BY MARIE COCCO

NED LAMONT IS AN UNLIKELY insurgent.

The founder of a small cable company that specializes in telecommunications systems for college campuses, Lamont is a wealthy man who speaks with the measured cadence of one who earns his living making deals, not political speeches. Yet the Greenwich businessman has got Connecticut Democrats all wired up: Lamont promises a primary run against Senator Joe Lieberman, an entrenched incumbent with national stature, a flush campaign account—and a firm hold on state party regulars that resembles the grip of an old-time political machine.

Lamont was, in fact, moved to challenge Lieberman himself in part because he could find no established Connecticut politician to take on the senator.

His journey began last fall, when Pennsylvania Congressman John Murtha stirred Democrats around the country with his declaration that the Iraq War was a failure and that the troops should start coming home. Lamont found himself aghast at Lieberman's response: The senator endorsed George W. Bush's stay-the-course policy. "Does America have a good plan for doing this, a strategy for victory in Iraq?" the senator wrote in a column in—of all places—*The Wall Street Journal*. "Yes, we do."

A furious Lamont, whose only stint in elective office was as a town selectman in Greenwich, tried to enlist more prominent Democrats to challenge Lieberman. They all turned him down.

"It's kind of like General Motors, isn't it?" Lamont said in an interview, comparing a politician's ascent to the climb up the corporate ladder. "If you're assistant vice president, then you go to executive vice president and then maybe president. You don't challenge things like this."

So Lamont decided to take Lieberman on himself. It is, to say the least, no contest of equals.

LIEBERMAN HAS HELD PUBLIC OFFICE in Connecticut since 1970. He was first elected to the U.S. Senate in 1988 and has pulled in upwards of 60 percent of the vote in his reelection contests. He leads comfortably in early polls that match him against Lamont or former governor Lowell Weicker, who briefly threatened to challenge Lieberman over the war. With more than three decades in public office, Lieberman's favor bank overflows with chits he can call in.

The most significant of these? His financial hold on the party apparatus. Lieberman provided nearly $1 million to the state party in 2000, the year he ran simultaneously for reelection to the Senate and as Al Gore's running mate. The senator is up front about the consequences a primary would have on the state party's treasury: If he must fend off a challenger, money just won't be available to Connecticut Democrats for their own campaign operations, their May convention, or for tough, targeted House races against Republicans Chris Shays and Rob Simmons. "A credible primary challenge would make that difficult," Lieberman campaign manager Sean Smith says.

Lieberman, said one state party official, has been "incredibly generous" to the party in the past—a generosity the hi-

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erarchy clearly would like him to sustain.

The Hartford convention coming up in May is likely to be the scene of the campaign's first showdown. To force a primary through convention rules, Lamont would have to be endorsed by 15 percent of delegates. That's a substantial threshold—especially at an event for which Lieberman's contributions provide support.

It's so substantial, in fact, that a federal court in 2003 threw out as unconstitutional a state law that had granted access to the primary ballot solely to candidates who could win 15 percent of party delegates. The Connecticut legislature was then forced to enact a new ballot-access law that gives candidates the ability to get on the ballot by collecting petitions. This is clearly Lamont's most likely route.

As it happens, gathering petition signatures is just the type of political operation at which the grassroots activists who've been drawn to Lamont excel. The signature drive must begin in late April, and Tom Swan, Lamont's campaign manager, says he intends to collect 30,000 signatures, about double the required number, before the state convention. "It's not going to be hard for us to get on the ballot," Swan says.

Winning, though, is another matter. Just five years ago, Lieberman was a Democratic icon. When Gore picked him for vice president—the first Jew ever on a national ticket—his anointment seemed to please the party's notoriously fractious sects. Traditional liberals got goose bumps at the elevation of a Jewish candidate. At the same time, centrists of the Democratic Leadership Council, still dominant after Bill Clinton's two terms in office, were just as pleased to have one of their own.

Since then, Lieberman has alienated many Democrats with his pro-war stance, his vote to halt a filibuster against Justice Samuel Alito, his frequent support of Bush, and his coziness with Republicans generally. Liberal blogs buzz with all manner of alleged Lieberman indiscretions, including a friendly interview with conservative media personality Sean Hannity and a fund-raiser held on Lieberman's behalf by well-known Republican lobbyists. Lieberman's voting record in 2005 was more conservative than that of any other senator from a blue state, according to *National Journal*'s annual analysis of liberal and conservative votes.

"You're not going to lose a senator, you're going to gain a Democrat," Lamont tells skeptics.

Indeed, Republicans in the state are more favorably inclined toward Lieberman's reelection than are Democrats, according to recent polls. Case in point: The embattled Shays just endorsed Lieberman, forcing other top Republicans to disavow rumors of an official cross-endorsement and prompting Lieberman's campaign to nix the idea as well. Even so, a clear majority of Democrats at this stage say they want the senator reelected.

Still, Lamont says, "I'm not afraid of the challenge." He courts town Democratic committees in hopes of making a strong showing among convention delegates. Besides challenging Lieberman on the war, Lamont pushes for universal health care, a tried-and-true cause among the rank and file and an issue Lamont says he understands as a businessman burdened by insurance costs.

There's little doubt, though, that his campaign is fueled by the energy of former Howard Dean supporters who have stayed in the political game in Connecticut. Indeed, the Lieberman-Lamont dust-up may turn out to be less a battle over Iraq than a test of whether the remains of Dean's network, in league with Internet activists, can make good on their claims that they represent a disillusioned rank and file and can—or should—wield new power within the Democratic Party.

It's a quirk of fate for Lieberman, who initially won his Senate seat with an upstart campaign against the incumbent Weicker—running simultaneously to Weicker's left, as a Democrat, and to his right, as more socially conservative. The straddle has served Lieberman well electorally. Now it just might trip him up. **TAP**

***Marie Cocco** writes a column syndicated by* The Washington Post *Writers' Group.*

CAPITOL HILL

TRAVELIN' BLUES

Reformers, don't go overboard: many congressional junkets are good.

BY SAM ROSENFELD

The Republican two-step on ethics reform has proven an amusing spectacle this season. First come panicked promises of reform from GOP congressional leaders; then come rank-and-file pushback and a hasty public retreat. A typical case presented itself when Speaker Dennis Hastert and House Rules Committee baron David Dreier proposed a blanket ban on all privately funded congressional travel. Mere days later, newly elected House Majority Leader John Boehner took the occasion of a February *Meet the Press* appearance to tell Tim Russert, "I have my doubts about that."

Boehner's insouciance reflects the majority view of his rank and file. Proponents of such a ban, meanwhile, count among their ranks not only the spooked House speaker, but also virtually every major watchdog group, high-profile outside experts like ex-congressman and 9-11 Commission co-chair Lee Hamilton, and the Senate's leading goo-goo gadfly, Russ Feingold, who scolded his colleagues at a February hearing, "If members of Congress can't justify spending taxpayer money to do a fact-finding trip, they shouldn't go. And neither should their staff."

Advocates of a ban offer a compelling argument and boast solid reform credentials. Nevertheless, the travel issue stands as perhaps the single stopped-clock-is-right-twice instance in the current ethics reform debate: Boehner and the skeptics are correct in spite of themselves. The costs of a blanket private travel ban would outweigh the benefits of the very limited dent in corruption such a reform might offer. Indeed, the climate provoked by the

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Jack Abramoff scandals has already served to curb congressional travel in ways that ill serve the public interest and the cause of sound policymaking.

IT WOULD BE FOOLISH TO DENY THAT much privately funded congressional travel is tainted by corporate influence-peddling. Trade associations proliferate among the private funders compiled and ranked by the watchdog outfit PoliticalMoneyLine, as do shell nonprofit policy groups that operate more as conduits for lobbyist money and influence than serious independent research outfits.

But progressives ought to consider what else would get chucked out along with the boondoggles. The legislative branch, after all, affects policy across an enormously wide span of issues, and travel plays a role in more areas than most recognize.

Consider a low-profile casualty of the recent controversy surrounding private travel. The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), a 30-year-old nonprofit, includes child marriage as one area of focus. That practice, common in parts of Africa and South Asia, greatly circumscribes girls' life prospects and endangers their health. In addition to increased exposure to AIDS and abuse, "girls have sex long before they're physically ready to," explains Leslie Calman, ICRW's vice president of external relations, "which means they have pregnancies and bear children before their bodies are fully ready."

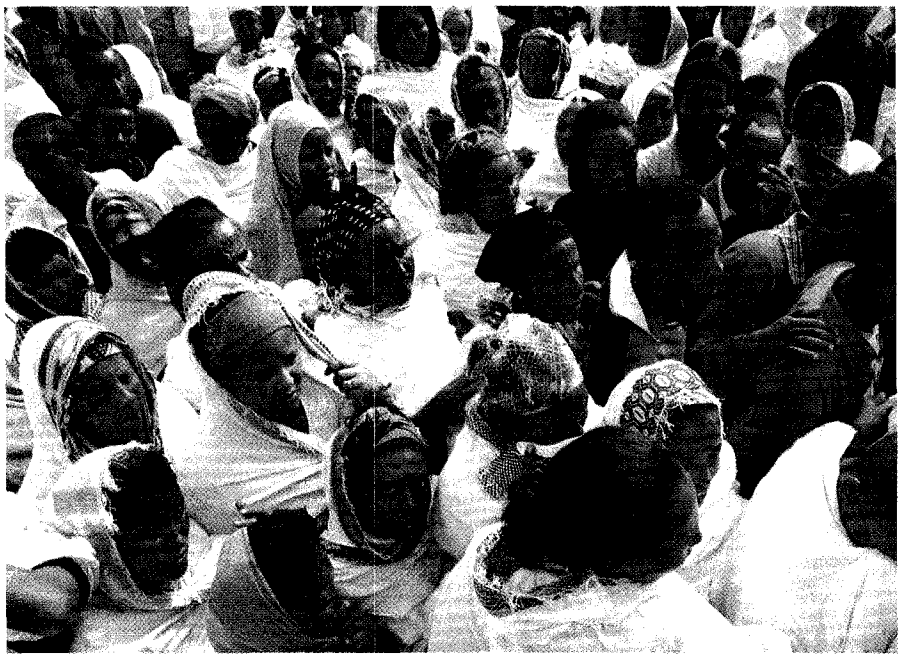
The results include high maternal and infant mortality rates as well as the prevalence of a horrific condition called obstetric fistula—a hole between the bladder, vagina, and sometimes rectum that leaks fluid. The condition typically leads to abandonment and ostracism.

Several months ago, ICRW decided to organize a fact-finding trip to Ethiopia—where 50 percent of girls are married by the age of 18—to educate Hill staffers about child marriage. The itinerary included a visit to a fistula clinic in Addis Ababa and another in the northern countryside, tours of local projects that provide girls with alternatives to child marriage and prostitution, and meetings with USAID staffers and Ethiopian officials. The hope is that this kind of educational trip might lead to the inclusion of language in foreign operations bills directing USAID to work on this problem and perhaps allocating funds for the purpose.

The trip's organizers initially attracted interest and commitments from staffers in both parties and both chambers of Congress—then, one by one, the aides began backing off. "Before Abramoff happened," says Calman, "four staffers had already signed on, and there were a number of others who had expressed interest. Then we started getting sad phone calls from people saying their bosses had instructed them that now is not a good time to take any trips." The planned roster of six to eight Hill aides shrunk to one. (At the last minute, ICRW signed up a second staffer who had been planning on attending a similar trip that was cancelled.) ICRW went forward with the trip in February—with just the two staffers, one from each party—but the feeling lingers that the recent crackdown is taking an unwarranted toll.

The difference between a lavish Abramoffian boondoggle and a trip like ICRW's is not especially difficult to divine. Hill staffers in hock to the well-heeled fistula lobby could have hoped to enjoy slightly more luxurious trappings on this particular junket. "One day we just ate bananas and bread, because that's all that we could get on the road," recalls one participant in the Ethiopia trip.

But ICRW's experience is hardly unique. The current climate has prompted Americans for the UN Population Fund to put a planned trip to Nicaragua on hold, and Population Action International (PAI) to cancel a February visit to Tanzania to assess U.S.-funded family planning programs. PAI released a statement in late January urging Congress to "find a sensible, measured alternative to a proposed unilateral ban on all privately funded congressional travel."



The Unseen: One worthy congressional fact-finding trip to Ethiopia was nixed.

But what kind of alternative reforms are possible? Regular, codified distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate private sponsors of travel are difficult to draw, and the educational value of a given trip is always a matter of interpretation.

Significantly tougher pre-travel certification requirements, which barely exist now, could help to draw such lines. "There should be a pre-travel clearance system that's rigorous and transparent and enforced," says James Thurber, director of American University's Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies. This would require both sponsors and congressional staff to submit details about the travel and to apply for permission before a panel. Thurber sees the appeal of granting responsibility for travel

ANTONY NJUGUNA/REUTERS/LANDOV

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clearance to a bipartisan entity such as a proposed independent Office of Public Integrity, which would monitor congressional ethics. Enforcement of existing travel rules requires significant strengthening, and an Office of Public Integrity could help do that as well.

In early March, Senate Republicans (with some Democratic support) killed a proposal for just such an office. Of course, the majority party's obvious lack of interest in boosting enforcement and oversight of travel rules could theoretically bolster the case for eschewing rational reforms in favor of a simplistic blanket ban on private travel. But limiting congressional travel solely to the existing public system for funding trips would come at serious costs, and the prospects for improving that system even in the wake of a ban on private sponsorship are dim.

For one thing, official government-funded congressional travel delegations (CODELS) tend to exclude junior members, and often are organized by the majority in a partisan fashion. Moreover, public funds for travel are not available for staffers in members' personal offices—only committees have travel budgets, and that money underwrites travel only by committee staff. "There are 535 legislative assistants on Capitol Hill who are responsible for foreign affairs issues," explains Rob Gustafson, a lobbyist who helped organize the ICRW trip. "If you couldn't take privately funded travel, currently none of them would have money to travel to see the actual programs that they talk about."

Theoretically, lawmakers could address these problems through more thoroughgoing reforms of the process for public funding. And indeed, a truly ideal system would be one in which public funds were regularly and fully available for staff and members to engage in educational travel—and in which such publicly funded travel was in fact encouraged. That would be ideal not only because travel is a valuable part of lawmakers' jobs, but also for the same reason that significantly boosting pay for staffers and members of Congress should be a pillar of progressive ethics reform: Making public service remunerative and enjoyable would help to slow the revolving-door exodus of talented personnel and help prevent congressional staff from becoming supplicants to special interests that offer perks and services. Unfortunately, as the past decade's budget squeeze on congressional offices and the perenially vexed politics of congressional pay increases both illustrate, the ideal system is utopian.

The public-interest costs of banning private sponsorship of travel would be serious indeed. A reformed system, in which private travel were legal but subject to a rigorously enforced clearance and ethics process, provides the best real-world solution. The certainty of some continued corruption and dubious junkets notwithstanding, the public will be well served to keep letting lawmakers fly the friendly skies. **TAP**

CAMPAIGN '06

THE DEMOCRACY LAB

Next fall's swiftboat-style attacks have been debuted in Minnesota.

BY GARANCE FRANKE-RUTA

If the 2004 presidential race taught Democrats any lesson, it's that all the policy pronouncements in the world, even if delivered by a decorated veteran, are no match for a relentless barrage of early negative ads that poison the well of public opinion and plant false information in the minds of voters. That Republican strategy worked in 2004. Now, as Democrats are busy trying to buff their national-security credentials inside Washington, conservative activists are rolling it out again in the swing states.

During two weeks in late February, Minnesota was bombarded by a series of misleading advertisements about the Iraq War sponsored by the Progress for America Voter Fund, a conservative "527" committee founded in 2001. In 2004, the group became known for two ads. The first, "Finish It," a pro-war ad, morphed an image of John Kerry's face into the faces of a group of masked, armed terrorists and asked, "Would You Trust Kerry?" It ran in only two states, but received widespread media attention before being condemned as the Willie Horton ad of 2004. "Ashley's Story" was the soft-focus alternative. Aired in nine swing states in a $14 million buy in the waning days of the campaign, the spot showed Bush hugging 12-year-old Ashley Faulkner, whose mother was killed on September 11, and quoted her saying, "He's the most powerful man in the world, and all he wants to do is make sure I'm safe, that I'm OK." The spot was described as one of the most influential of the campaign; all told Progress for America spent $38 million on the election.

The new ads feature images of the smoking World Trade Center, as well as the bombings in London in 2005 and Madrid in 2004. Soldiers and parents narrate the spots, arguing for the importance of staying in Iraq. The ads strongly suggest that the fight in Iraq is against al-Qaeda, in retaliation for the group's alliance with Saddam Hussein—an affiliation that has been repeatedly shown to be nothing more than the fervid imaginings of the neoconsevative mind. "We fight because our county and our allies have been attacked," Marcellus Wilks, a staff sergeant in the Army, says in one. The ads, which do not mention any specific candidate, slam the media and those who would pull out of Iraq as being weak on terrorism and suggest that bringing the troops home would take the pressure off al-Qaeda and thus bring the war home, too. As *Minneapolis Star Tribune* columnist Nick Coleman warned in mid-February: "Fellow Americans, the Swift Boating of Iraq has begun."

Such ads couldn't have been better scripted to appeal to the demographic that swung the election of 2004 in Bush's direction: white, married women.

Democrats often think that being strong on national security and appealing to fe-

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male voters are two separate tasks. This line of reasoning contends that candidates appeal to women voters with the choice issue. This idea, however, is mistaken: As Republicans and some Democratic campaign professionals know, women's concerns are much broader than that.

Even among the unmarried women who are the Democrats' most loyal constituency—they voted 62 to 37 percent for Kerry in 2004—choice is not a major element in bringing women to the polls, as Anna Greenberg, a pollster for Women's Voices, Women Vote, has explained. This may change as abortion access is increasingly threatened, but Greenberg's January 2006 survey found that the top national issue unmarried women are concerned about is the war in Iraq—close to three-quarters believed it was not worth the cost—while the biggest local issues were education and health care.

The problem for Democrats is that unmarried women are much less likely to vote than are married women. In 2004, 59 percent of unmarried women voted—even with a major push to bring single women to the polls—compared with 71 percent of married women. Additionally, there is a considerable drop-off in the voting of unmarried women in midterm elections. That makes the votes of married women, who drop off in smaller numbers, even more important in off-year contests.

Since about 1980, women have voted Democratic in larger numbers than men, but a mix of cultural worries, world events, and GOP strategy has shrunk the gender gap since 1994. By 2004, actual mothers voted against the so-called "mommy party" and for Republicans, for values and security reasons. White, married women voted 61 to 38 percent for Bush, and white, married women with children voted for him 65 to 34 percent, according to a national election poll conducted by Edison Media Research and Mitosky International.

In summer 2005, Celinda Lake's Lake Research Partners conducted a series of focus groups with women in Denver and Philadelphia, which found that white mothers had a positive view of current U.S. foreign policy. "Some, particularly mothers, express the view that if 'we don't do it, who will' and that we need to stop terrorism overseas before they attack us at home," noted a November 2005 write-up on those focus groups for The White House Project, a feminist group trying to elect a woman president. "I think of homeland security as being here in our homeland," one focus group participant said. "I think of the war on terrorism as being out in Iraq trying to head off the terrorists before they get here."

Despite the lack of evidence that Saddam Hussein or his fellow Baathists had anything to do with 9-11, that sounds uncannily like the message Progress for America's ads were trying to reinforce. The new ads brought up 9-11 and defined Iraq as "the frontline in the war on terror." "If we weren't fighting Al Qaeda in Iraq, we'd be fighting them in America," Major Chuck Larson of the U.S. Army Reserves said in one spot, echoing the concern of Lake's focus group participants. Women may be particularly vulnerable to this message because, as Ellen Goodman has reported in *The Boston Globe*, they are much more likely than men to believe that Saddam Hussein was connected to 9-11. Forty percent of the population was under this misimpression in 2004, with 51 percent of women believing so, compared to 29 percent of men.



This Year's Swift-Boater: Iowa's Major Chuck Larson

IN MINNESOTA, THE ADS ARE ONLY the beginning. "They are going to pull every trick out of the bag to incite the public and put fear into the public on an issue that is very important," says Democratic Farmer Labor Party spokesman David Ruth. The state is facing several competitive congressional elections, a challenge to the incumbent Republican governor, and a contest for an open Senate seat pitting Republican Congressman Mark Kennedy against likely Democratic Farmer Labor Party nominee Amy Klobuchar, who leads the race so far.

Meanwhile, Larson is a name to remember, as he seems to be positioning himself as this year's John O'Neill (the swift-boat leader). A former Republican Iowa state senator who sits on a presidential advisory committee on drugs, he returned from a tour of duty in Iraq and in 2005 founded the group Families United for Our Troops and Their Mission, from which some of the ad's speakers are drawn. The group served as a conservative military counterweight to last summer's protests by anti-war activist Cindy Sheehan, and held a counter-protest to her Gold Star Families for Peace rally in Washington last September. Today, Families United has chapters in six states, including Minnesota, Michigan, and Iowa, and is planning to open new ones in Pennsylvania and Ohio, sites of important 2006 Senate races. Larson is a perfect vehicle though which to promote misinformation before Democrats get themselves mobilized.

Larson also plans to release a book in the spring, and Progress for America has coupled its test run of TV spots with election-style mailers and a Web site. The conservative national security message is being studied and refined based on its results. Once the well is poisoned, as we learned in 2004, it's very hard to un-poison it. **TAP**

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Not Your Father's Detroit

The Motor City virtually created the old era of shared prosperity. Today, the middle has fallen out of the economy. What can we do to get it back?

BY HAROLD MEYERSON

In the mid-1950s, the Ford Motor Company decided that its most profitable car needed a new home. Up until then, Ford had been making Lincoln Continentals in Highland Park, the industrial enclave near the center of Detroit, where the company had first put down its roots. In 1957, though, it moved its Lincoln production line to its shiny new plant in Wixom, a rural community soon to become suburban, located about a half-hour's drive from Detroit. In short order, Wixom was not only turning out all of Ford's Lincoln models, but also that most classic of 1950s cars, the Thunderbird.

Modern American manufacturing—in some sense, modern America—had begun in Highland Park. In 1913, Henry Ford opened his first real factory there, featuring the world's first large-scale assembly line. The following year, he announced that he'd pay his employees an unheard-of $5 a day, based on the theory that if they made Model-T's, they should be able to buy them. In fact, the purchasing power of Ford workers didn't become truly substantial until the United Auto Workers (UAW) unionized the company in 1941; thereafter, the discontents of factory work notwithstanding, the economic life of Ford workers became, in a sense, a marvel of the world. As members of the predominant union in the predominant industry in the predominant economy on the planet, the auto workers at the Big Three enjoyed not only good pay but the nation's first comprehensive health insurance, supplemental unemployment insurance, generous pensions with retiree health coverage—all paid for by the companies, which had no trouble covering these costs.

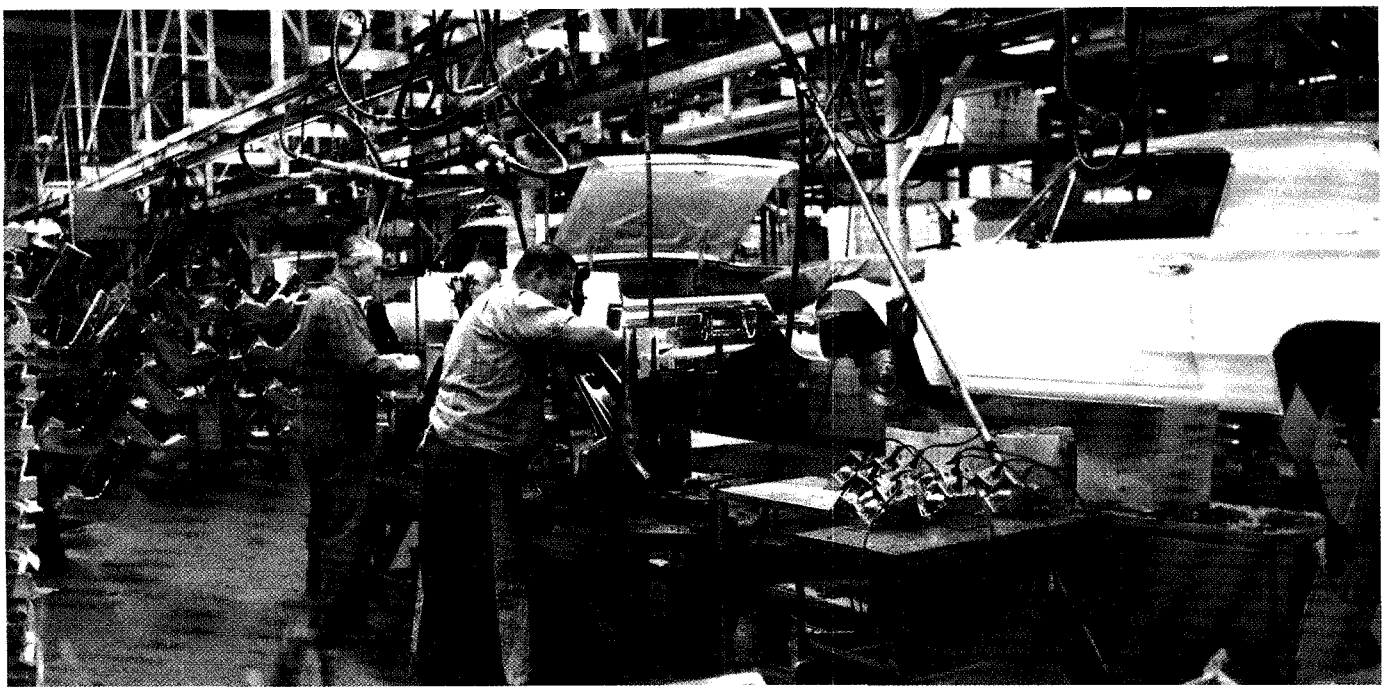
It was a good life, and it was passed down from father to son. Dave Berry's grandfather came from Tennessee to work at Ford's giant River Rouge plant in 1925. His father went to work at Wixom, and 17 years ago Dave followed him into the plant, where today he heads the UAW Local. And by every available measure, the plant managers and the Local have crafted a marvel of production.

Most auto plants essentially build the same car with minor brand variations—the "platform," as it's called, is the same, but different grillwork and a different name get slapped on at the end of the line. At Wixom in the mid-1990s, the managers and the employees, working in small groups, re-engineered the plant so that it turned out three different platforms on the same line. Lincolns, Mustangs, and even a Ford LS stick-shift with the steering wheel on the right (for the Japanese market) rolled off the line. For four consecutive years, Wixom placed first in Ford's internal evaluation of all its plants' efficiency and productivity. And on Berry's wall hangs an award from J. D. Power and Associates, which ranked the plant the third best auto factory in North or South America—coming in ahead of any Japanese transplant—in 2005.

Today, that award is the coldest of cold comforts. Two years ago, Ford announced that it would produce its new Lincoln Zephyr not at Wixom, but at a plant in Mexico—a reduction in work that diminished the Wixom work force from 3,750 to its current 1,450. Then, this January 23, Ford announced it would lay off 34,000 workers and shutter 14 factories by 2007, and Wixom was on the list. Virtually all the Wixom workers caught up in the earlier round of layoffs had been able to transfer to other Ford plants, but the remaining workers—the ones with the most seniority; their average age is 49—don't think for a moment that the leaner, meaner Ford will have a place for them. Nor are the ones eligible for retirement confident that Ford will honor its commitments to them once they're gone.

In February, I spent several hours at the UAW Local hall, directly across the street from the Wixom plant, with Berry and a dozen of his members. They were understandably reeling—their pride in their own work only sharpening their critique of the company. "It was the quality of the plant that kept us alive, not the cars," said Tony Brooks, who heads the Local's military veterans' committee. "When did they last redesign the Town Car?" Over two hours, the members ran through a catalog of the things Ford had invested in—Jaguar, Fiat, ventures outside auto altogether—rather than redesign its own cars. Like General Motors, Ford made most of its profit over the past couple decades from luxury cars, pick-ups, and SUVs (or it did until gas prices sky-rocketed), and Wixom had been a major profit center—the revenues from its Lincolns rolled over into constructing and revamping its truck plants. But in recent years, even as General Motors was redesigning its entire Cadillac line, Ford did little to upgrade or reinvent the Lin-

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That Was Then: These 1950s Ford employees had it good.

coln, whose sales have fallen by 36 percent since 2000. Ford's health insurance and legacy costs, tacking on more than $1,000 to the sticker price of every vehicle it produced, added a particular burden to its U.S. production costs (globally, Ford made a $2 billion profit last year, though it lost $1.55 billion within the United States).

The problem—America's problem—is that the abrupt end of the living standards that Wixom workers enjoyed isn't exceptional; it's emblematic. Across the economy, the wages and benefits of ordinary Americans are under assault. The new model American manufacturer, which once may have offered wages and benefits comparable to the Big Three, has typically cut its wages to somewhere between a half and two-thirds of what Ford and GM have been paying. Highly profitable Caterpillar Tractor, for instance, now offers its new hires just $22 an hour in wages and benefits, half what it pays its more senior employees. "There is a balance that must be struck," Caterpillar group president Douglas Oberhelman told *The New York Times*, "between being competitive and being middle class."

The decline in income is hardly limited to manufacturing. A new survey of the nation's 361 metropolitan areas, which account for 86.3 percent of the nation's GDP, has found that the average wage of jobs lost in the recession of 2001-2003 was $43,629, while the average wage of jobs created in 2004-2005 was $34,378—a tidy 21 percent decline. While productivity increased by 11.7 percent between 2001 and 2004, median household income rose by a scant 1.6 percent.

The crisis of living standards is also reflected in the collapse of the employer-provided welfare state that's been the norm for the past half-century. A Kaiser Family Foundation study from last year, for instance, finds that while 66 percent of companies with 200 or more employees offered retiree health benefits in 1988, just half that number—33 percent—do so today. In the past year alone, such pillars of high-tech as Hewlett-Packard, Verizon, Motorola, and IBM have terminated their traditional defined-benefit retirement plans.

Indeed, the new economy appears to hold out no more hope for mass prosperity than the old one. The trade deficit in our high-tech sector is expanding faster (it grew by 20.4 percent last year to $44 billion, contrasted to a surplus of $15 billion as recently as 1999) than our trade deficit overall (which grew by 17.5 percent last year). The problem is not that we lack for engineers and scientists, but that we are creating historically low levels of jobs for them, as more and more U.S.-based companies shift their research and development to low-wage nations. The problem is that in the current recovery, unlike any recovery since the advent of the New Deal, almost all new revenue to corporations is going to profits, and virtually nothing to wages. (In the five recoveries before the current one, 25 percent of new corporate revenues went to profits and 75 percent to employee compensation; in the current recovery, 59 percent has gone to profits and just 41 percent to compensation.)

The middle is falling out of the American economy. At first glance, from a sufficient distance, we may appear to be doing just fine. The GDP, after all, grew by 3.6 percent last year; unemployment has fallen to 4.8 percent. But what once distinguished the United States among the nations of the world was not simply the volume of our wealth, but our distribution of that wealth. In the decades following World War II, we were something new under the sun: the nation with the first middle-class majority. Between 1947 and 1973, productivity in the United States rose by 104 percent. Median family income in the United States. also rose by 104 percent. Since then, however, productivity gains have outpaced median family income by a margin of three to one, and in recent years, by eight to one. Indeed, as Northwestern University economists Ian Dew-Becker and Robert Gordon have demonstrated in a recent study, over the past couple of decades, *all* the income from productivity gains have gone to the wealthiest 10 percent of our countrymen.

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To any dispassionate economic historian, it's no mystery how America managed once to attain broadly shared prosperity. Between 1875 and 1975, the level of schooling for the average American increased by seven years, with a sharp increase in the number of college-educated Americans in the decades following World War II. Our technological innovation, often spurred by the investment of federal defense dollars, was second to none, and those innovations were turned into products at factories here in the United States. Unionization was at an all-time high in the years that median income tracked productivity, so high that the wage-and-benefit packets at unionized firms set the standard for non-union firms, too. Immigration was at an all-time low. We encountered little competition from other nations' economies.

None of these conditions pertain any more. Americans' level of schooling has stopped rising after a century of steady increase, and even if it were continuing, a raft of new studies suggests that many of these good jobs of the future will be offshored to cheaper climes. We shun industrial policy, while our competitor nations entice our corporations abroad. Unions, which once represented 35 percent of the workforce, now represent 12.5 percent, and just 7.9 percent in the private sector, ushering in an age of wage and benefit reductions. Globalization of production has enabled the majority of leading American corporations to get cheaper labor abroad and reduce labor costs at home.

We can't prove that declining income of white working-class males causes their drift to the right, but does anyone believe it's coincidental?

Taken together, these changes have largely negated virtually all our theories about how to create mass prosperity. That's not to say there aren't discrete policies that we liberals could implement if we had the power, some of which would have vast positive impacts. Nationalized health insurance would take a huge burden off of employers with older work forces, and enable them to compete more easily with foreign companies whose health-care costs are picked up by their governments. We could provide wage insurance to workers forced to move to lower-paying jobs, as many are, with the government paying a fraction of the difference between their old paychecks and their new ones. We could raise the minimum wage. We could amend labor laws so that workers who wish to join a union could do so without fear of being fired, and hope that that would enable those unions—trying to organize non-offshorable workers whose jobs can't be outsourced—to succeed.

But none of these changes would fundamentally alter the DNA of American financial and corporate institutions, which ceaselessly impels them to disaggregate firms, outsource work, and find the cheapest labor in a world brimming with cheap labor. In the world these institutions shape—and that is the world we live in today—generating broadly shared prosperity amounts to squaring a circle.

This is a crisis for the nation; it is a crisis for all advanced economies to the extent that our brand of capitalism comes to dominate theirs. But it is particularly a crisis, and challenge, for liberals and Democrats in the United States and for Social Democrats (and even social Christians) in Europe and other advanced economies. For, at heart, the parties of the left and center left are the parties of broadly shared prosperity. That is their—our—raison d'être. In any given election, the inability to lay out a plausible scenario for renewing mass prosperity is not likely to leap out as the Democrats' most glaring deficiency. But it creates a terrain on which bad stuff can happen. The alternative to a politics of economic advancement is often a politics of social resentment. The steadily declining income of white working-class males over the past quarter-century correlates to their increasingly rightward voting habits. We can't prove the correlation is causal, but does anyone believe it's coincidental?

With such pillars of the economic establishment as Paul Samuelson (doyen of American economists) and Andy Grove (doyen of American high-techies) now fretting audibly about the effect of China, India, and the global labor market on American worker incomes, the question of how to retain or rebuild mass prosperity in the United States has become an official (which is not, in the Bush years, to say governmental) topic of concern. That doesn't mean we are awash in plausible solutions, however. The problem is not how to engender growth; the economy is growing. The problem is that growth, in our current form of capitalism, often comes at the expense of the majority of our countrymen. And that's a problem that requires a very deep fix.

Can America survive American capitalism? Only if it fundamentally alters the way we do business. Herewith, three immodest proposals:

• First, revive industrial policy. We haven't had an industrial policy discussion in the United States in some time—since the early 1990s, in fact. It's easy to understand why we had one then: From the late 1970s through the early 1990s, America lost 2.4 million manufacturing jobs.

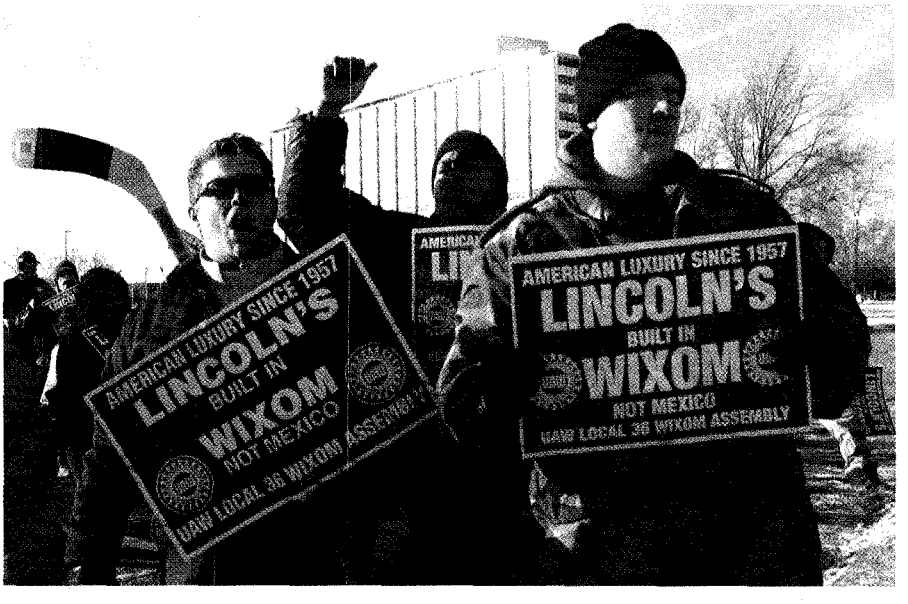
Now, in the past five years alone, we've lost 2.7 million manufacturing jobs. But there is no great public conversation about this. The reasons for this silence are many. There's the declining political weight of the manufacturing sector (both companies and unions) in both political parties. There's the corresponding rise of the political clout of the financial sector (a driving force in America's deindustrialization) in both political parties. There's the prosperity of the late 1990s, which led many to believe that high-tech could engender a sustained, widespread economic boom as manufacturing had once done.

Of course, high-tech did nothing of the sort. Not only did it fail to bolster incomes in other sectors of the economy, it hasn't provided rising incomes to its own employees since the bubble burst in 2000. For one thing, the number of jobs in science and engineering is not increasing. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), we have generated just 70,000 new jobs in

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engineering and architecture over the past five years, and the BLS does not project an increase in high-skill employment over the next decade. In raw numbers, the fastest growing occupations between 2004 and 2014, says the bureau, will be retail salespersons, nurses, post-secondary teachers, customer service representatives, janitors, waiters, food-preparation workers, and home-health aides. Five of the 10 fastest-growing occupations fall under the BLS's designation of very-low income—which the BLS defines as an annual income under $20,184. In such an economy, sending more people to college is not really a panacea. In 2002, says the bureau, 26.9 percent of all jobs in the United States required college degrees; in 2012, that will rise to just 27.9 percent—one measly point.

Much of the problem is that many highly skilled professionals have jobs that are increasingly offshorable. Last year, economists J. Bradford Jensen of the Institute for International Economics and Lori Kletzer of University of California-Santa Cruz concluded that it's skilled workers in general and scientists, mathematicians, and engineers in particular who are vulnerable to having their jobs exported. "Across all occupations," they write, "workers in tradable occupations receive 9 percent higher wages than workers in non-tradable occupations. For 'high-end' service occupations, workers in the tradable sector receive almost 13 percent higher wages ... ." For confirmation of Jensen and Kletzer's hypothesis, simply turn to a study by economists Jerry and Marie Thursby (of Emory and Georgia Tech, respectively) published this February that surveyed 200 U.S.-based multinationals. The Thursbys reported that 38 percent of the companies planned to relocate at least some of their research and development facilities to other nations, chiefly India and China. "More companies in the survey," the authors wrote, "said they planned to decrease research and development employment in the United States and Europe than planned to increase employment." ("Having internationalized the hands," says chief AFL-CIO economist Ron Blackwell, "they're busy internationalizing the mind.")



This Is Now: Wixom walkout, 2005

The export of our high-end manufacturing may be one factor hastening the export of American research and development. As former Reagan administration Commerce Department official Clyde Prestowitz has pointed out, the U.S. armed forces have unparalleled night-vision capacity because of the work of U.S. scientists with cadmium mercury telluride semiconductor materials. The manufacturers of such materials, however, are located in Japan, and now the research scientists have moved there, too. The army may claim to own the night, but, in actuality, it's renting it.

The movement of strategic manufacturing abroad was of sufficient concern to the President's Council of Advisers on Science and Technology that in their 2004 report they noted, "[the] research to manufacturing process is not sequential in a single direction, but results from an R&D-manufacturing ecosystem [so that] ... new ideas can be tested and discussed with those working on the ground." There are fewer such ecosystems of this kind in America today.

There are also fewer strategic industries. The vast majority of machine tools used in U.S. factories and shops are made abroad now. With them have vanished the American workers capable of working with high-end machine technology. Having received a spate of new aerospace contracts, Boeing is currently hiring new workers at its Wichita plant, and, according to Machinists union international president Tom Buffenbarger, is "scouring the country for tool and die makers and instrumentation mechanics, because we don't have them any more."

Indeed, if deindustrialization were to continue apace, it's not clear that America would have the work force and the facilities to produce the goods we'd need to close our massive trade deficit. "If we're in the business of making things with fewer workers, that's okay," says University of California-Berkeley economist and former Clinton administration Treasury Department official J. Bradford DeLong. "If we're out of business altogether, that's something else. I worry that a lot of manufacturing capacity we could get back now we may not be able to get back in a couple of years." The promise of global trade, after all, is that we will one day be able to sell many billions of dollars of products to the newly minted middle class of China and India. If we can't, if we're no longer making what several billion new consumers would want to buy, then our economic straits would be something worse than dire.

So we need an industrial policy, to cajole and compel American corporations to make strategic investments in America. The bipartisan reaction against the administration's proposed Dubai-port deal points to a broad public awareness that the nation's security interests are not invariably well-served by the calculus of the marketplace. Surely, the offshoring of our scientific and high-end manufacturing capacity poses a threat to our economy every bit as dangerous to our long-term security as the sale

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of our harbor operations. Yet the federal government and the entire financial community view any effort to induce U.S.-based corporations to invest at home as heresy. Meanwhile, the Chinese government routinely picks up the costs of building factories and training a workforce for American corporations seeking to move there. "Because we hate having U.S. bureaucrats pick winners and losers," Prestowitz has written, "we outsource the job to Chinese bureaucrats."

One strategy for in-sourcing American industry is to have the government—abetted by public- and union-controlled pension funds—upgrade the physical infrastructure, lower energy costs (through vast retrofitting projects), undertake industry-specific worker training, and offer companies tax credits in return for their commitments to invest and hire locally, pay decently, and contract with their suppliers regionally. *(We make a better country, you become a better citizen.)* Such a strategy describes the project that Wisconsin-based political scientist Joel Rogers and Michigan-based auto industry analyst Dan Luria have undertaken to enlist the governors of the industrial Midwest—the area most decimated by outsourcing—to build a regional consortium to attract industrial investment. Those principles run so counter to the strategies—more than that, the instincts—of our current capitalism, however, that our capitalism probably must be altered if genuine in-sourcing is to occur.

• Second, upgrade all non-offshorable work. Casual observers of unions could have been forgiven last summer if they failed to fathom what the unions that left the AFL-CIO to form the Change to Win Federation had in common. Politically, the unions ranged across the spectrum. What united them was that they represented workers whose jobs could not be exported: nurses, truckers, supermarket clerks, carpenters, laborers, hotel workers, and janitors. Together, they represented 6 million workers—which left, by their count, 44 million workers in those sectors unorganized.

We may not think of these jobs as commanding decent wages, but in fact, union density is determinative here. Hotel room maids in cities where hotels are almost entirely unionized make $20 an hour; in cities that are half-unionized, $12 an hour; in non-union cities, $7 an hour. In heavily unionized Las Vegas, hotel workers can avail themselves of employer-funded training programs to advance to more highly skilled jobs, and make enough to buy homes that would be far beyond the reach of hotel workers in non-union towns. In the largest unionization drive currently underway in the nation, UNITE HERE (the hotel workers union) is using the threat of a strike this summer against hotels in most unionized cities to compel some national chains to agree not to oppose the organization of their workers in non-union cities.

Nobel laureate economist Robert Solow, currently working on a Russell Sage Foundation study comparing low-wage work in Europe and America, believes that upgrading service-sector work is crucial for the American economy. Pessimistic about the future of domestic manufacturing, Solow notes that some European nations make civil servants of child-care and elderly care workers, and pay them accordingly. "We usually think of a revived WPA creating employment in construction and manufacturing work," he says, "but if it's not focused on the service sector, it won't be that useful. That's where the demand is." One such neo-WPA proposal, appearing on California's primary ballot this June, is Rob Reiner's initiative to create universal preschool for the state's four-year-olds, funded by a tax on the wealthiest Californians. The measure includes $700 million to provide college training and credentials to child-care providers, and provisions that would enable them to form unions.

Professionalizing and unionizing non-offshorable work would help reinvent broadly shared prosperity in America. But it would not necessarily offset the effect of downscaling occupations that can be shipped abroad (indeed, the diminution of the manufacturing labor pool increases competition in the service-sector labor pool). "Andy [Stern, president of the Service Employees International Union and the leading figure in the drive to organize non-offshorable workers] thinks you can grow a union inside these limitations," one leading labor official comments. "I doubt it. The neo-liberal system incentivizes employers to compete with each other in the worst possible way. You can't fix this at the workplace. We don't have business leaders who will say, 'We want to make money, but we also want to build a strong national economy.' You can't solve our problems unless you constrain these guys to focus on that."

• And so, third, constrain business leaders by changing corporate governance. In the evocative words of business writer Barry Lynn, the CEO "was once the company's man in the boardroom. Now, he's the investors' man in the company." Even that may be giving corporate leaders too much credit, since the model CEO not only seeks to enrich the shareholder at the expense of employees, but himself at the expense of the shareholder. A 2005 study of 20,000 firms by economists Lucian Bebchuk and Yaniv Grinstein finds that the percentage of the typical firm's total earnings paid out in compensation to the company's top five executives grew from 5 percent in 1993-1995 to 10 percent in 2001-2003. Bebchuk and Grinstein conclude that out of the $83 billion that the 99.99th percentile of wealthiest Americas reported on their taxes in 2001, $48 billion was the income of companies' top five executives, which averaged $6.4 million (CEO salaries averaged $14.3 million). With their salary and benefit levels set by corporate boards and compensation committees on which their fellow CEOs sit, the men who run American business are paid a fortune to retain a fortune. Nice work if you can get it.

But the case for corporate clean-up goes well beyond the need to end legalized looting. Unless statutory changes force corporate and investment-fund boards to exclude back-scratching CEOs and include a majority of employee and public representatives, disinvestment in America—at least, the America of decently paid work—will continue apace. This is not to negate the importance of restoring progressive taxation and the right to join unions and a hundred other necessary reforms. It is to say that American capitalism itself is, in its exploitation of globalization, the most fundamental threat today to American living standards. If the era of mass prosperity that began at Highland Park is not to end at Wixom, the nation must reclaim its economy. **TAP**

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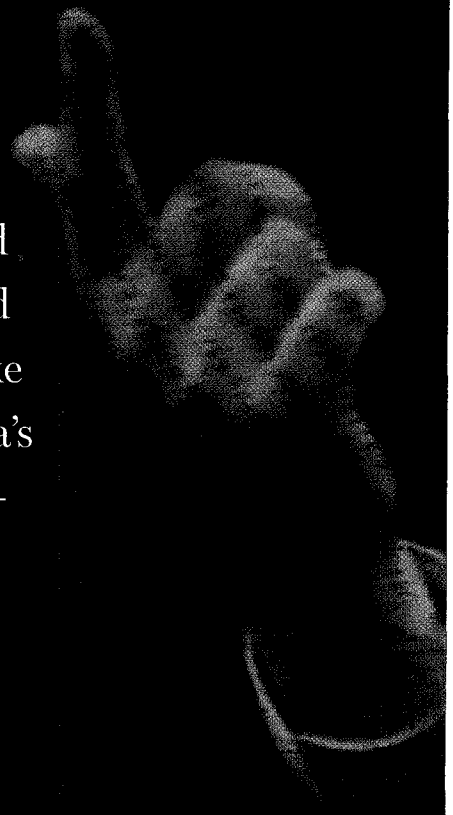
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The New New Gore



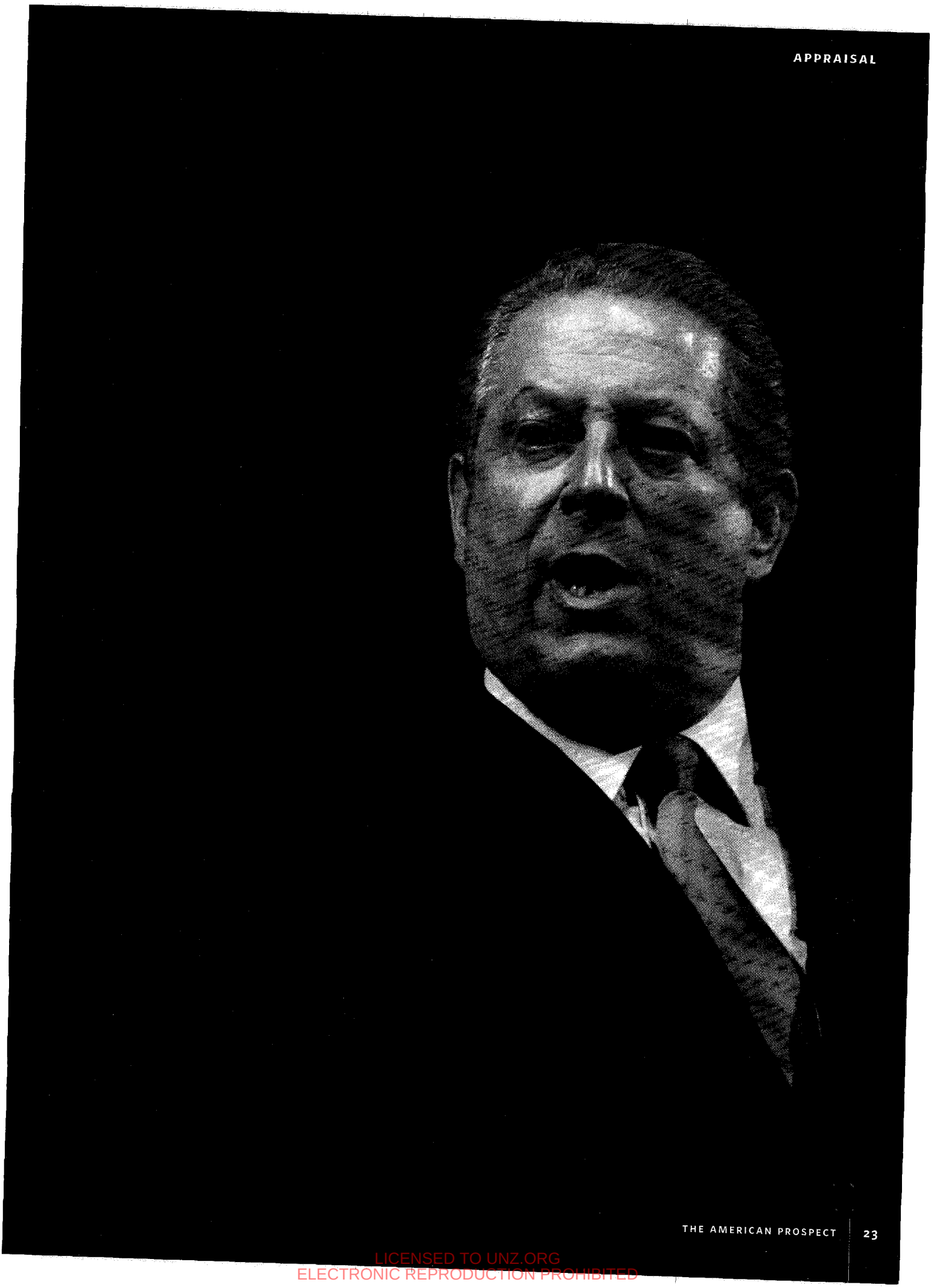
Five years ago, Al Gore was the much-mocked pol who blew a gimme with his stiff demeanor and know-it-all style. Today? C'mon, admit it: You like him again. Now his own man rather than the media's robotic creation, he's emerged a bold truth-teller—and many who wrote him off have noticed.

BY EZRA KLEIN

THE MOST IMPORTANT SPEECH OF AL GORE'S post–non-presidency was neither well-covered nor particularly dramatic. He delivered it against a plain blue curtain, and when he finished, the applause rippled but never roared. None in attendance, however, would have dared call it boring.

The address was the keynote for the We Media conference, held at the Associated Press headquarters in New York last October and attended by an audience that included both old media luminaries and new media

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innovators. In attendance were Tom Curley, president of the AP, Andrew Heyward, president of CBS News, and *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof, all leading lights of a media establishment that, five years earlier, had deputized itself judge, jury, and executioner for Gore's 2000 presidential campaign, spinning each day's events to portray the stolid, capable vice president as a wild exaggerator, ideological chameleon, and total, unforgivable bore.

They must have been wondering what changed. Over the next 48 minutes, Gore laced into the state of the media, lamenting the "systematic decay of the public forum," and echoing Walter Lippmann's belief that the propaganda emanating from the press corps was rendering America's "dogma of democracy" void. Journalism, Gore said, had grown "dysfunctional," and now "fails to inform the people."

The speech wasn't just an isolated blast aimed at wresting some headlines or settling some scores. Gore has long been quietly obsessed with excising the media from the politician-public relationship. That's been the unifying aim of all his seemingly disconnected ventures since returning to the public eye: a determination to evade, and eventually end, the media's stranglehold on political communication. Yet few seem to have noticed this campaign, with most observers too caught up in Gore's old storylines to recognize his new efforts.

So when he taught a class at Columbia's School of Journalism, the conventional wisdom held that Al Gore was becoming the boring professor he was always meant to be. When he began distributing his speeches through MoveOn.org, the pundits intoned that he was merely proving himself the wild-eyed liberal they'd always suspected he was. When he started the Gen-Y oriented Current TV, the commentators snickered at his pathetic attempts to become cool. And when he endorsed Howard Dean for president, political watchers quickly associated Dean's downfall with Gore's reverse-Midas touch, laughing as Al lost another one.

Taken together, these moves, and Gore's coming film on the global warming crisis—"An Inconvenient Truth," to be released in May—point to a new narrative: Gore as warrior against the gatekeepers of the press. As it has turned out, Al Gore as presented by Al Gore is infinitely more electric and attractive than the anodyne stiff the media popularized and the voters remembered.

Since his loss, Gore has undergone a resurrection of sorts, shrugging off the consultants and the caution that hampered him during the campaign and—aided by new distribution technologies—evolving into perhaps the most articulate, animated, and forceful critic of the Bush administration. And now, with Democrats taking a fresh look at a man they thought they knew and speculation mounting around his ambitions in 2008, it seems that the man much mocked for inventing the Internet is in fact using the direct communication it enables to reinvent himself.

THE STANDARD HOLDING PATTERN FOR LEADING POLITIcians who awaken one morning to find themselves suddenly out of a job is to take the helm at a major company or maybe join a couple of corporate boards. They often choose major multinationals like Halliburton or shadowy investment consortiums like The Carlyle Group. Gore's chosen berths were a bit different. The "inventor of the Internet" decided to join the powwows of its popularizers, becoming a senior adviser to Google and a member of Apple's board of directors, arguably the two most innovative companies on the tech landscape. It seemed an almost overly symbolic rejection of his monochromatic reputation: the candidate of earth tones joining two companies with famously multihued logos.

But it wasn't. In fact, little could've been more natural for Gore, one of Congress' earliest and most committed computer nerds. Though his misreported comments on the Internet's lineage were unfortunate for his campaign, Gore, in fact, was a prime mover in its early days—if not its father, then definitely the rich uncle who sent it to college, using his seat on the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee to ensure the fledgling technology had the financial wherewithal to make something of itself. Vinton Cerf and Bob Kahn, the two men most often given credit for birthing the Web (due to their development of the crucial TCP/IP protocols), were so appalled by the media's distortion of Gore's comments that they jointly penned a defense, writing that "no other elected official ... has made a greater contribution over a longer period of time" than Gore.

Gore's interest in communicative technology and media dates back at least to the late 1960s, when he was attending Harvard and, under the direction of presidential historian Richard Neustadt, wrote his thesis on television's relationship to the presidency. It continued when he enlisted in Vietnam as an army journalist and deepened when, on returning, he signed up with his hometown paper, *The Tennessean*, where he remained for four and a half years, breaking a corruption scandal that resulted in the arrest of two city council members. He has often mused that if he had not assumed dynastic responsibilities and followed his father's footsteps into politics, he would've enjoyed being a journalist.

It's fitting, then, that after some hanging chads lynched his political ambitions, he returned to his roots, accepting a post at Columbia's journalism school to teach about the intersection between journalism, his first career, and the Internet, his longstanding obsession. The class, which began in Spring 2001, was entitled "Covering National Affairs in an Information Age." Gore's first lecture engaged objectivity itself, challenging the journalistic trope that fairness resides in controversy and an article has to represent all sides—no matter how marginal—equally. Instead, Gore argued that the journalistic impulse to exalt even the most fringe views to parity in order to furnish opposing perspectives is harmful to basic accuracy. This didn't sit well with more than a few of the wannabe reporters in the class, many of whom were aghast at the suggestion that the media should attempt to actually *mediate* between truth and spin. As Josh Bearman, a student in that class and now an editor at the *LA Weekly*, recalls it, "He stood up there challenging the entire dogma of the journalism school. First semester, you learned that objectivity was emperor, then Gore came in and told you it had no clothes."

And along with that backlash, the old anti-intellectualism Gore experienced in 2000 made a reappearance. As Bearman tells it, "He knew more than everyone in the room. So the class basically turned against him because he was smarter than they were, and they didn't like that. We witnessed exactly what had

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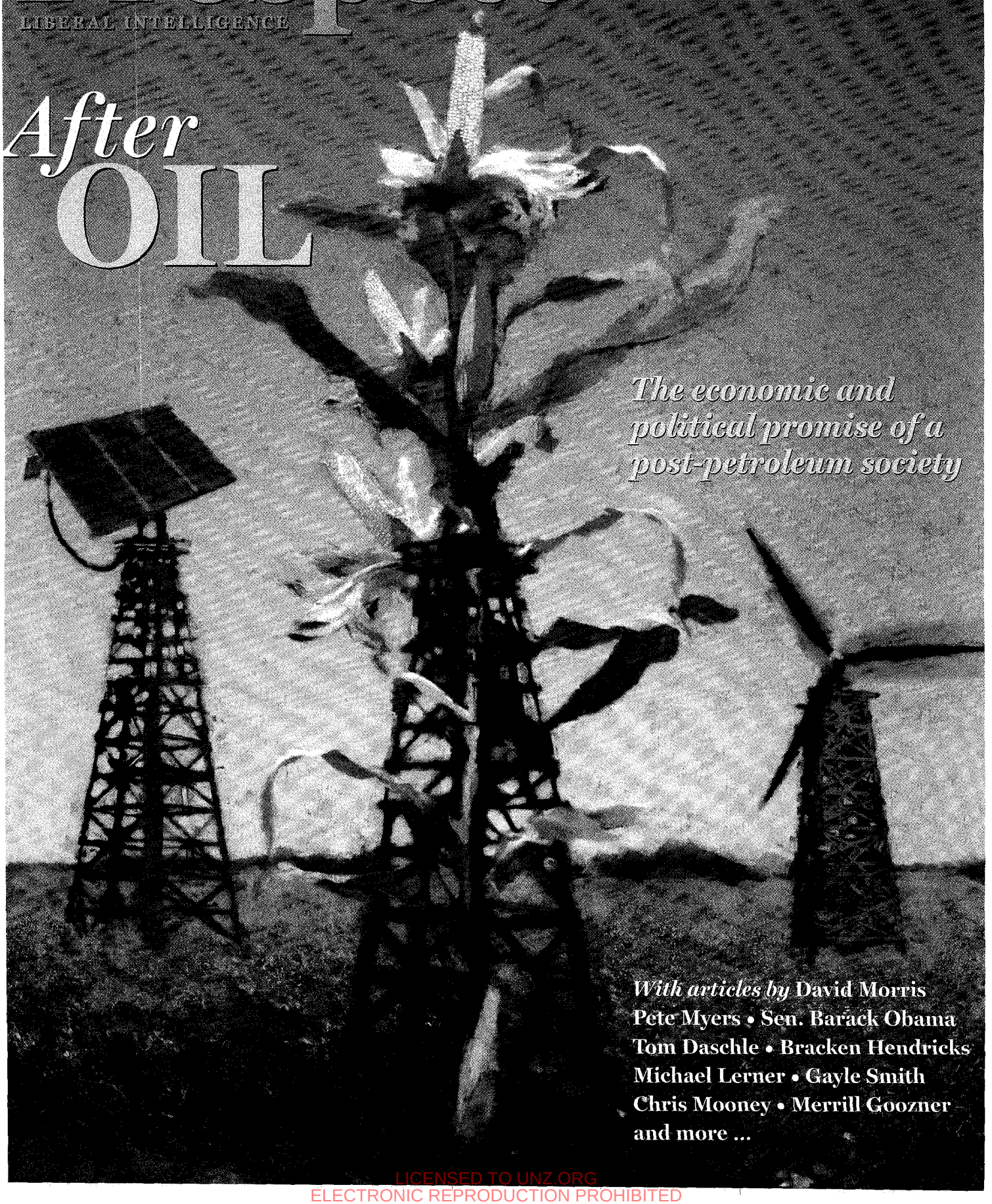
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LIBERAL INTELLIGENCE

SPECIAL REPORT
APRIL 2006

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The economic and political promise of a post-petroleum society

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The inexorable advance of climate change and concerns about oil dependency have put renewable energy back on the public agenda. Finally, a "green economy" based on exciting innovations in agricultural technology could reduce our thirst for oil, reverse environmental destruction—and revive rural America and its populist politics.

A3 The Once and Future Carbohydrate Economy
Substituting living plants for fossil fuels could transform energy security, the environment, world trade, and U.S. politics. Are we ready to do it right? ***By David Morris***

A8 A New Prairie Populism
How renewable energy can transform heartland politics and economics ***By Bracken Hendricks***

A12 Fueling the Future
A progressive vision for America's auto industry ***By Senator Barack Obama***

A13 Good Genes Gone Bad
The new public health reflects our understanding of how environmental contaminants harm genes. New genetic science offers new hope. ***By Pete Myers***

A17 Follow the Farmers
Building a sustainable economic future from America's heartland ***By Tom Daschle***

A18 Building Green
Developer ***Jonathan Rose*** discusses green construction with Robert Kuttner.

A20 ***Merrill Goozner*** on the need for government leadership; ***Richard Heinberg*** on the looming threat of global oil depletion; ***Chris Mooney*** on the promise of the new green chemistry; ***Christopher D. Cook*** on ensuring that small farmers reap rewards of a farm-based energy policy; ***Ezra Klein*** on Europe's leadership on smart environmental policies; ***Gayle Smith*** on an agenda to unite farmers at home and in the world's poorest reaches; and ***Michael Lerner*** on the green economy as a new global ethic.

We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Wallace Global Fund, which made this special report possible. Special thanks to Nelson Harvey for research assistance.

Cover illustration by McDavid Henderson

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HIGH OIL PRICES, ENERGY SECURITY CONCERNS, AND A GROWING awareness of climate change have put the prospect of a carbohydrate economy back on the public agenda. The successful substitution of living plants for fossilized plants would profoundly and positively influence the future of agriculture, the environment, world trade, and energy security. Whether the result will truly benefit farmers, the world economy, and the natural environment depends on the nature of the policies we design to achieve that transformation.

The Once and Future Carbohydrate Economy

BY DAVID MORRIS

LESS THAN 200 YEARS AGO, INDUSTRIALIZING SOcieties were carbohydrate economies. In 1820, Americans used two tons of vegetables for every one ton of minerals. Plants were the primary raw material in the production of dyes, chemicals, paints, inks, solvents, construction materials, even energy.

For the next 125 years, hydrocarbon and carbohydrate battled for industrial supremacy. Coal gases fueled the world's first urban lighting systems. Coal tars ushered in the synthetic dyes industries. Cotton and wood pulp provided the world's first plastics and synthetic textiles. In 1860, corn-derived ethanol was a best-selling industrial chemical, and as late as 1870, wood provided 70 percent of the nation's energy.

The first plastic was a bioplastic. In the mid-19th century, a British billiard ball company determined that at the rate African elephants were being killed, the supply of ivory could soon be exhausted. The firm offered a handsome prize for a product with properties similar to ivory, yet derived from a more abundant raw material. Two New Jersey printers, John and Isaiah Hyatt, won the prize for a cotton-derived product dubbed collodion.

Ironically, collodion never made it as a billiard ball: The plastic, whose scientific name is cellulose nitrate, is more popularly known as guncotton, a mild explosive. When a rack of cellulose nitrate pool balls was broken, a loud pop often resulted. Confusion and casualties ensued in saloons where patrons were not only drinking but sometimes armed.

People did find other uses for collodion, however, in dentures and buttons. Later, a new cotton-based plastic called celluloid spawned consumer photography. To this day, many in Hollywood still call their films celluloids, although Steven Spielberg may not remember why.

At the end of the 19th century the names of chemical companies and products often contained a form of the word cellulose, a living chemical consisting of a long string of carbon and hydrogen and oxygen molecules (thus the word carbohydrate). The name of one of the country's largest chemical manufacturers, Celanese Corporation, was a contraction of "cellulose" and "the easy feeling" of wearing acetate apparel. After celluloid, cellophane, the world's first film plastic, was introduced to instant success.

By 1920, however, the nation had reversed the vegetable-mineral ratio, using two tons of minerals for every one ton of vegetables. Coal displaced wood for energy. Gasoline-powered cars roamed the streets. Yet outside the nation's energy markets, living carbon still held its own against fossilized or dead carbon. Rayon, made from wood pulp, was the world's best-selling synthetic fiber. The first injection molding machines in the 1930s made plastic products from cellulose acetate.

The Great Depression, the collapse of international trade, and then World War II spawned a worldwide effort to replace imports with domestically produced products. Brazilians made plastics from coffee beans, Italians made fine suits from milk protein, and by the 1940s, four million vehicles in European countries were operating on ethanol blends of up to 33 percent. Arthur D. Little wowed and charmed the world by literally making a silk purse from a sow's ear.

In 1941, when Japan cut off access to Asia's rubber plantations, the United States launched a crash synthetic rubber program. Washington drafted into service both the nation's oil refineries and breweries. In 1943, most of America's synthetic rubber was made from ethanol. By 1945, the United States produced over 600 million gallons of ethanol, a level not again attained until the mid-1980s. A small amount of ethanol was made from wood.

Up until the end of World War II, some companies were still hedging their bets on the material base of the future chemical industry. In 1945, the large British chemical manufacturer

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ICI still maintained three divisions: one based on coal, one on petroleum, and one on molasses.

Meanwhile, the carbohydrate economy was featured in the popular press and newsreels, reporting on such sensational developments as Henry Ford's biological car. The body of the 1941 demonstration vehicle consisted of a variety of plant fibers, including hemp. The dashboard, wheel, and seat covers were made from soy protein. The tires were made from goldenrods, bred by Thomas Edison on his urban farm in Fort Myers, Florida. The tank was filled with corn-derived ethanol.

The next time you watch the obligatory Christmas showing of *It's a Wonderful Life*, pay close attention to this scene: Jimmy Stewart is on the phone with his brother, who excitedly proclaims he is going to be rich because he is on the ground floor of the next major industry, soybean-derived plastics!

Yet only 25 years later, movie audiences hear Dustin Hoffman in *The Graduate* ask an older man for career advice. The man responds with one word, "plastics," and everyone in the audience knows he means petroleum-derived plastics.

In a quarter of a century, the carbohydrate economy had virtually disappeared, a victim of remarkably low crude oil prices (the price dropped to under $1 a barrel in the late 1940s) and rapid advances in making an ever-wider variety of low-cost products from crude oil. American farmers didn't mind; the Marshall Plan alleviated the 20-year-old agricultural depression by creating a large export market for U.S. surplus crops.

By 1975, not a drop of ethanol was in our nation's gas tanks. Indeed, industrial ethanol was made from petroleum. Bioplastics disappeared. Mineral oil inks replaced vegetable oil inks. Americans used eight tons of minerals for every one ton of vegetables.

THE PENDULUM SWINGS BACK

Beginning in the 1970s, the carbohydrate economy slowly began to reemerge, the result of three mutually reinforcing trends.

The first was technological. Advances in the biological sciences lowered the cost of making bioproducts. At first, entrepreneurs focused on high-priced and low-volume markets, like medicines and medical equipment. As production expanded and firms moved down the learning curve, costs dropped and larger markets opened up.

In the 1980s, for example, polylactic acid (PLA), a chemical derived from milk sugar (lactose), was used to make a suture that could be absorbed inside the body. The cost was high, some $200 per pound, but only an ounce or less was used in the surgery. By the late 1990s, the price of PLA, now made from less expensive corn sugar (fructose), had fallen to about a dollar a pound. PLA is increasingly competitive with petrochemicals for use as a textile, in car bodies, and in containers.

The second factor was political. Fossil fuels are attractive because, under great pressure over eons, the oxygen contained in living material was squeezed out (hence the name hydrocarbon), leaving a very dense energy source. One pound of coal contains the same amount of energy as four pounds of wood.

However, the same geological pressure that squeezed out oxygen squeezed in several unnatural and unwelcome elements, like sulfur and mercury. As an environmental movement emerged and as governments began to regulate these pollutants, the cost of using hydrocarbons rose to reflect their true environmental cost, and biofuels and products became more competitive.

As a clean air measure, for example, the federal government required oxygenates in gasoline. That created a large market for oxygen-containing additives like ethanol. Regulations reducing sulfur levels in diesel helped open up a market for biodiesel. When governments required degradable plastics, bioplastics became more competitive. When phosphates in detergents were restricted, enzyme markets expanded.

The third factor was the rising price of oil and natural gas. In 1970, the price of crude oil was $1.80 per barrel. The price soared to $34 a barrel in 1982, and then fluctuated between $10 a barrel and $30 a barrel for the next 20 years. Finally, in 2005, high oil and natural gas prices seemed here to stay, a result of the rising cost of producing oil and the risk premium an unstable Middle East imposed on oil markets.

With oil at $50 a barrel, many biochemicals have become flat out competitive with petrochemicals. At $60 a barrel, ethanol derived from corn is competitive without subsidies.

These three factors made a significant market for bioproducts possible. They did not make their use inevitable. Remember, bioproducts must invade markets long controlled by the oil and petrochemical industry. In many cases, bioproducts actually need their competitors' permission to enter these markets.

Consider the instructive history of fuel ethanol.

After World War I, car companies introduced high-compression engines. Existing fuels caused knocking, a result of uneven combustion. The industry feverishly sought an anti-knock additive. Ultimately, it narrowed the choice to two: ethanol or lead. Ethanol would require 10 percent of the gas tank. To achieve the same effect, lead needed less than 1 percent. The car companies, unsurprisingly, chose lead, and stuck to it even after outcries from the public health community about the effects of leaded gasoline.

In the 1970s, as part of its air quality efforts, the Environmental Protection Agency phased out leaded gasoline. Oil companies again could have substituted ethanol. Instead they chose to reformulate gasoline to increase the proportion of aromatic chemicals like benzene, toluene, and xylene. Then, in the late 1980s, the nation discovered these chemicals were carcinogenic and imposed limits on their use. The oil companies again could have switched to ethanol. Instead they chose MTBE, a product made from natural gas–derived methanol and isobutylene, a byproduct of the refinery process.

In the late 1990s, the nation discovered that MTBE was polluting ground water. Nineteen states began to phase out MTBE. So long as the Clean Air Act's oxygenate requirement remained, highly polluted urban areas had only one alternative: ethanol. The phase out of MTBE is the primary reason U.S. fuel ethanol consumption has doubled in the last three years.

Regrettably, this does not necessarily mean the market is embracing biofuel. Beginning in 1999, California petitioned the

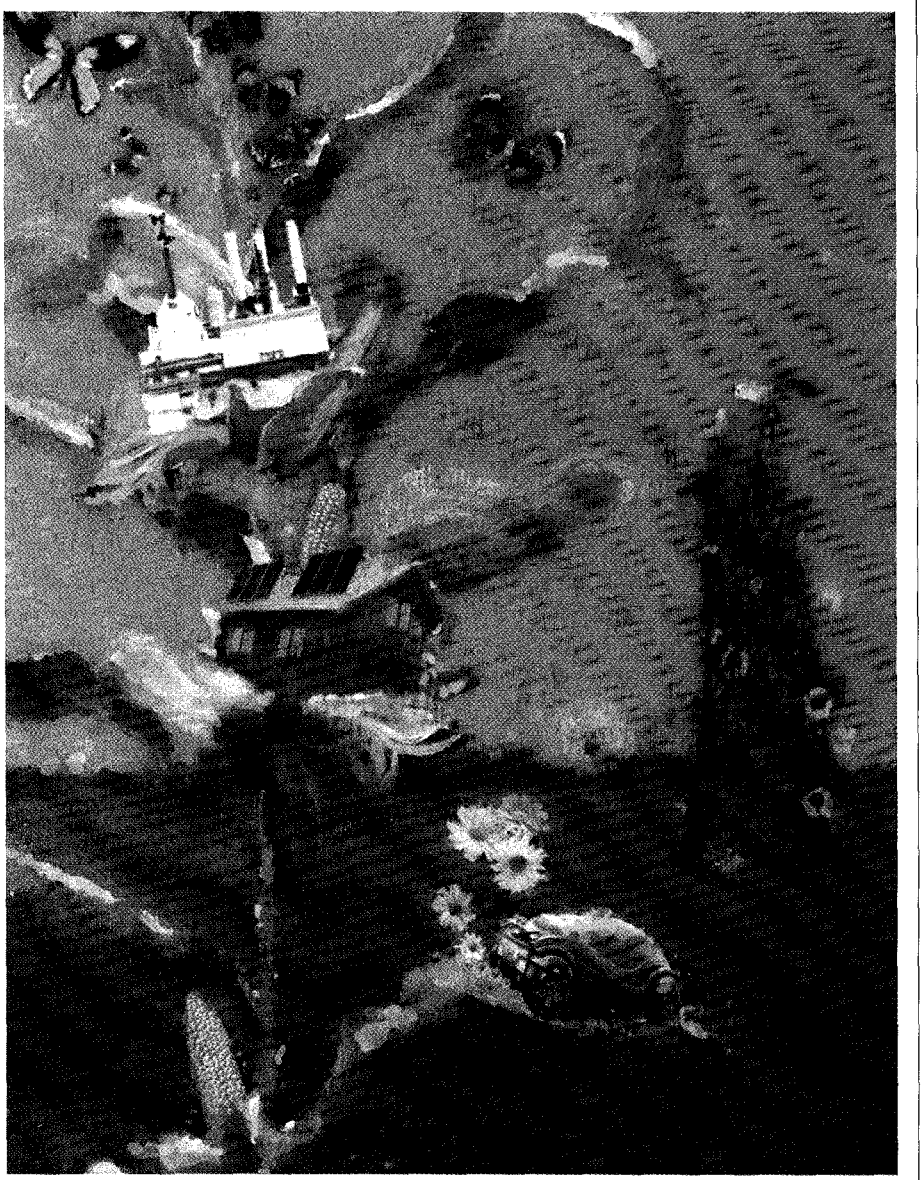
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federal government to exempt it from the oxygenate requirement. The oil companies, not surprisingly, liked this idea, and promised to formulate a gasoline that could meet all performance standards without compromising public health. Last August, the federal government eliminated the oxygenate requirement. California Senator Dianne Feinstein, the leader of the anti-ethanol fight, exulted. Instead of using 5.7 percent ethanol blends, California could now revert to a gasoline composed 100 percent of fossil fuels.

There's an old saying: Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me. To which I would add: Fool me four times, I'm an idiot.

Despite the rocky road traveled by biofuels, it appears that they are now here to stay. Production has doubled in the last two years and may double again in the next three years. In Brazil, ethanol now constitutes 40 percent of all automobile fuel; 80 percent of new cars are flexible fueled cars, capable of using any proportion of ethanol and gasoline.

Half a dozen countries now mandate biofuels; a dozen more may soon. DuPont is developing a carbohydrate-based division. Vegetable oils have displaced 40 percent of black inks in newspapers. Hydraulic fluids increasingly are made from vegetable oils, not mineral oils. Bioplastics are here.



MCDAVID HENDERSON

FASHIONING THE RULES

For the first time in 60 years, the carbohydrate economy is back on the public-policy agenda. We may be changing the very material foundation of industrial economies. Whether and how we affect that change can profoundly affect the future of our natural environment, our rural economies, agriculture, and world trade. It is an exciting historical opportunity, but one we should approach with deliberation and foresight.

As we design new rules we should keep in mind several key points:

• First, plants must play an important industrial role if we are to achieve a sustainable, renewable economy.

Plant-based energy sources and materials, often termed biomass, boast two essential features not found in other renewable resources, like geothermal, hydro, wind, sunlight. Biomass can be made into physical products and comes with built-in storage.

Wind and sunlight are intermittent. To count on them, we would need a way to store them. Plants are, in effect, batteries of stored chemical energy.

Wind and sunlight can be harnessed only to produce some forms of energy—heat, mechanical, electrical. Biomass can be used to make physical products. Thus biomass, but not wind or sunlight, can substitute for petrochemicals.

• Second, we need to pay attention to farmers.

The wind blows regardless of public policy. Policymakers can focus on developing effective *harvesting* technologies. But agriculture requires the enthusiastic participation of cultivators—farmers. Unless the farmers have the economic incentive, biomass energy and materials will not appear in significant quantities.

• Third, a carbohydrate economy could have grave environmental consequences.

Unlike most other renewable resources, biomass can be cultivated, harvested, and processed in nonsustainable ways. Soil erosion, fertilizer and pesticide runoff, and industrial pollution all can result from biomass inappropriately grown and processed. Public policy also needs to ensure that, when using biomass by-products such as cornstalks and wheat straw, farmland is not denuded of nutrients that nature needs to regenerate the land.

• Fourth, unlike other renewable resources, agriculture can

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satisfy a wide array of needs: food, fuel, clothing, construction, paper, and chemicals.

Policymakers must be careful if they introduce incentives that favor energy over other end uses of farming. In the hierarchy of uses of agriculture, food is still the highest and best use. And there may be other uses more valuable than making energy.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Congress subsidized garbage incinerators that generated electricity. Then we found that more fossil fuels could be displaced, at a lower cost, and with a more positive environmental impact, by recycling the paper and composting the grass and leaves.

Another case of misguided subsidy: Congress and the state of Minnesota recently offered handsome incentives for the generation of electricity from poultry manure. They overlooked the fact that it is a dry manure, high in nitrogen and inexpensive to transport, and an increasingly attractive substitute for natural gas-derived fertilizers. In Minnesota, most poultry manure is currently sold to farmers. But by the end of 2007, because of the new incentives, more than half the dry manure generated in the state will be diverted into making electricity, forcing farmers to look for fertilizer substitutes. Ironically, the fastest growing segment of agriculture is now organic foods, which cannot be grown using synthetic fertilizers.

The carbohydrate economy could transform agriculture as well as energy, reviving producer co-ops, and giving farmers a hedge against voilatile commodity prices.

• Fifth, biomass is not a silver energy bullet.

But it can play a crucial role in reducing our reliance on oil.

Worldwide, tens of billions of tons of biomass potentially are available for making chemicals and fuels. But we will need every one of those billions to meet even a minor portion of our future needs. Overall, biomass may satisfy 10 to 15 percent of our future energy needs. But it can displace a more significant part of our transportation fuels and an even more significant part of our oil fuels.

In the United States, about 60 percent of our oil is used for transportation. (An additional 15 to 18 percent is used to make petrochemicals.) Biofuels' compactness and relative ease of transport make them attractive transportation fuels.

Sufficient biomass exists to potentially displace 100 percent of our petrochemicals and 50 to 100 percent of our oil-based transportation fuels.

• Sixth, even in transportation, biomass will be the minor partner in a dual-fueled strategy.

The most efficient and environmentally benign transportation system will be powered primarily by electricity. Electric vehicles get over 100 miles per gallon. Unlike today's hybrid cars, which are internal combustion engine vehicles with a motor assist, tomorrow's plug-in hybrid cars will charge their batteries from the electricity system and become electric cars with an engine backup.

Between 50 percent and 100 percent of the vehicle's motive power will come from electricity. Sufficient biomass exists in this situation to provide 100 percent of the biofuels needed by the backup engine.

• Seventh, a carbohydrate economy will have a profound impact on agriculture and world trade.

The carbohydrate economy may have a far more profound impact on agriculture than on energy. Biomass may satisfy only a small part of our energy needs. But the additional amount required will be enormous, perhaps tripling the total amount of plant matter currently used for all purposes (food, feed, textiles, construction, paper). Thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, of biorefineries producing a variety of final products will dot rural landscapes.

Public policies to date have focused on expanding the use of biofuels. We need to pay as much attention to quality as we do on quantity. What do we want the new carbohydrate economy to look like? Aside from oil displacement, what are our long-term objectives, and our strategy for achieving them?

FARMERS AND LOCAL OWNERSHIP

More than a century of bitter experience has taught farmers that when they simply sell a raw crop, they fall ever further behind. Farmers receive about the same price for their crops today as they did 30 years ago, while the cost of farm inputs has more than doubled.

In 1970, a bushel of corn could purchase about five and a half gallons of gasoline. Today, a bushel of corn is worth only three-quarters of a gallon of gasoline.

About 30 years ago, farmers reinvented the producer cooperative, a business structure in which farmers own the processing and manufacturing links in the value-added chain. The birth of the first modern producer cooperatives occurred in the 1970s: Minnesota and North Dakota sugar beet farmers learned that the area's sole sugar beet processing plant would close, leaving them little market for their crop.

The farmers pooled their financial resources and bought the plant. The price of sugar soared. The sugar beet growers made a great deal of money. And in America, financial success begets imitation.

Other producer cooperatives emerged, slowly in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and then with increasing speed in the late 1990s and early years of the 21st century. Recently, the traditional cooperative has been joined by a new business form, the limited liability corporation.

Farmers today make substantial and ongoing investments in land and equipment. In the last decade they've discovered investing in a factory can be more financially rewarding than investing in land or equipment.

Iowa State University (ISU) estimates the five-year average after-tax return for an ethanol dry mill at 23 percent. On the other hand, 70 percent of Iowa's counties averaged returns on farmland of 2.5 percent or less.

Farmers who own the factory benefit far more from increas-

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ing ethanol demand than those who do not. Increased ethanol consumption over the last 25 years may have raised the overall price of corn by 10 to 15 cents per bushel. Farmer-owners receive annual dividends four, five, even 10 times higher.

Farmer-owned biorefineries also serve as a hedge for farmers against volatile commodity prices. When corn prices decline, production costs of ethanol also decline. At least a portion of the income lost on the sale of the raw material can be recouped from the increased profits from the sale of ethanol.

Farmer ownership also benefits the broader rural community. An oil refinery gets its raw material from out of the state, perhaps from outside the country. A biorefinery usually purchases its raw material within 50 to 100 miles of the facility.

Moreover, virtually all the oil refinery's profits leave the state for distant corporate headquarters and even more distant shareholders. Farmer- or local-owned biorefineries retain virtually all of the profits inside the state.

Consider Minnesota. For every dollar spent on ethanol in the state—assuming the ethanol is produced in-state in a farmer-owned biorefinery—some 75 percent stays in the state economy. For every dollar spent on gasoline, some 75 percent leaves the state economy. This equation makes biorefineries a powerful economic development vehicle.

How can we encourage farmer- and local-owned biorefineries? Here again, Minnesota's record is instructive. In the early 1980s, Minnesota's ethanol incentive mirrored that of the federal government by exempting ethanol sold in the state from a portion of the state gas tax.

The incentive worked. Minnesotans purchased ethanol-blended gasoline. But Minnesota didn't produce the ethanol. In the mid-1980s, farmers persuaded the legislature that public subsidies could more clearly benefit the state economy.

The legislature converted part of the tax exemption into a direct producer payment. The new incentive had three important features:

1. Production had to occur inside the state.
2. The biorefinery could receive payments only for the first 15 million gallons of ethanol produced each year. This encouraged smaller facilities, which in turn enabled farmer and local ownership.
3. An individual plant could receive the incentive only for 10 years. It would not become a continual drain on public resources.

The incentive proved remarkably successful. Today, 12 of Minnesota's 16 biorefineries are majority-owned by Minnesota farmers. Some 25 to 30 percent of Minnesota's full-time grain farmers own shares.

We need to redesign the federal incentive with the Minnesota experience in mind. We could begin by converting half the federal incentive of 51 cents per gallon of ethanol into a direct payment to the producer. (The other half could be retained as an excise tax exemption but should be tied to an index comprised of the price of corn and the price of wholesale gasoline. When the spread between them rises above a certain level, the tax incentive disappears.) A producer could receive payments for no more than 10 years, and only on the first 20 million gallons of annual production.

The federal producer payment could differ from Minnesota's in two respects. Production would not be required in any specific state. And farmer- and/or local-owned biorefineries would be favored.

THE NEW BROTHERHOOD OF THE WORLD'S FARMERS

The carbohydrate economy has the worldwide potential to catalyze a cooperative farmer movement that displaces the traditional farmer-versus-farmer battles. Traditionally, the carbohydrate has battled other carbohydrates for market share. High-fructose corn sugar versus sugar cane. Brazilian soybeans versus U.S. soybeans. In the future, producers of carbohydrates can cooperate to capture another huge, untapped market: hydrocarbons.

Farmers have been slow to recognize this opportunity. In fact, U.S. agricultural organizations allied themselves with the coal and oil industries to attack the Kyoto treaty. Such an alliance is reasonable if farmers view themselves simply as consumers of fossil fuels. If they view their crops as competitors to fossil fuels, however, opposing Kyoto makes no sense. They should enthusiastically embrace treaties to reduce global warming because these treaties invariably impose penalties on the dead carbon contained in coal and crude oil, while offering rewards for the living carbon contained in crops and trees.

Today, agriculture is one of the most contentious issues in world trade. A carbohydrate economy can reduce and perhaps even eliminate that tension. Rather than Indian and Brazilian and Nigerian farmers fighting for European and American markets, they can sell into vast new domestic energy and industrial markets. Indeed, the case for import substitution is even stronger in the south. Most southern countries can buy imports only with hard currencies. They can obtain hard currencies only by increasing exports or borrowing from the IMF or other banks. Thus, displacing oil imports with domestic fuels can reduce their external debt while bolstering their rural economies.

We live in an era of tumultuous change. Yet we should recall Bertrand Russell's distinction between change and progress. Change, he argued, is inevitable. Progress is controversial. Change is scientific. Progress is ethical.

We will have change, whether we want it or not. But progress comes only when we design rules that channel human ingenuity and entrepreneurial energy and investment capital toward constructing a society and an economy compatible with the values we hold most dear.

The carbohydrate economy beckons. **TAP**

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A New Prairie Populism

As clean energy begins to transform economies in America's heartland, it creates fertile ground for a new progressive politics.

BY BRACKEN HENDRICKS

BRIAN SCHWEITZER IS AN AGRICULTURAL SCIENtist, a gun owner, and a third-generation Montana farmer. He is also a popular Democratic governor of a usually conservative "red" state. Schweitzer likes to joke that he has a rule for himself: If he stays longer than 24 hours in Washington, D.C., he takes a bath in tomato juice when he gets home—the classic home remedy for the stench of skunk spray. This is pure Schweitzer. The man is not of the elite, and he is not going to be pulled away from his roots. But Schweitzer has a powerful, homegrown, progressive vision of America.

In his bid for governor, Schweitzer ran as an unabashed Democrat in a state with a long Republican tradition, and he ran on values: not the narrowly defined moral values of the Christian right, but broadly shared American values of freedom, opportunity, self-reliance, and responsibility to future generations. This stance played out in his treatment of the issues. On the environment, rather than accepting the right's formulation of burdensome federal regulations imposed by coastal tree-hugging elites, he proudly sounded a call to preserve and protect traditional hunting and fishing grounds, guaranteeing access for sportsmen and honoring the cherished traditions of generations of Montanans.

But Schweitzer's real passion is energy and its connection to economic development. On his desk in Helena you won't find stacks of papers; instead, he has vials of oil—safflower, canola, and camelina—and biodiesel made from these Montana crops. Schweitzer has made alternative energy and smart use of natural resources a centerpiece first of his campaign, and then of his administration, showcasing how investment in new, clean, and innovative energy can rebuild Montana's economy, put money back into the pockets of his constituents, and create lasting opportunities for Montana farms and businesses.

When Schweitzer took over the statehouse, Montana produced less wind energy than any other state in the union—even Rhode Island and Delaware—yet it ranked among the top for wind potential. Today, he has passed an ambitious renewable energy law that requires 15 percent of all state electricity, by 2015, to come from wind and other clean energy sources. And he is already more than halfway to meeting that goal—at a cheaper price per megawatt than the state's new traditional coal plants. Under his leadership, Montana passed new tax credits for investment in biodiesel production, and today, thanks to public grants and loans, a plant in Culbertson that once made confectionary oil from canola and safflower now turns out biofuels for the local market at a price below the cost of diesel. For Schweitzer, this is common sense, but it's also rooted in his love of the land, his sense of patriotism, and his commitment to a better future for his state.

IN JANUARY, WHEN PRESIDENT BUSH DELIVERED HIS State of the Union address, he startled listeners by declaring that America is addicted to oil. It took only a only few seconds in an hour-long address, but it represented a stunning turnabout, however insincere. This was hardly Nixon going to China, since there was little serious policy follow up. But, as La Rochefoucauld famously said, hypocrisy is the tribute that vice pays to virtue. If an oil-man president felt he had to address, even only symbolically, what so many of his countrymen sensed, it was an important coming of age for the goal of a post-petroleum economy.

The costs of our collective oil addiction are hardly news to working Americans who have been paying more at the pump, nor to security experts who chart the vulnerabilities of oil tankers, pipelines, power plants, and refineries to disruption by terrorist attack, and the excessive influence of oil on America's geopolitical goals. Nor was it news to economists who track our escalating trade deficit, diminishing reserves, and the ever-increasing fuel demand from China and the developing world. But it was a stark indication of just how far and fast the politics of energy, and by extension all of American politics, have been changing. Admitting you have a problem is, after all, the first step in curing any addiction.

By Superbowl Sunday GM was running commercials for trucks that run on ethanol, and the auto industry was softening its line on changing fuel technology. And prospects for a bipartisan oil savings bill in the Senate suddenly seemed a little brighter. But these visible signs are really just the tip of a po-

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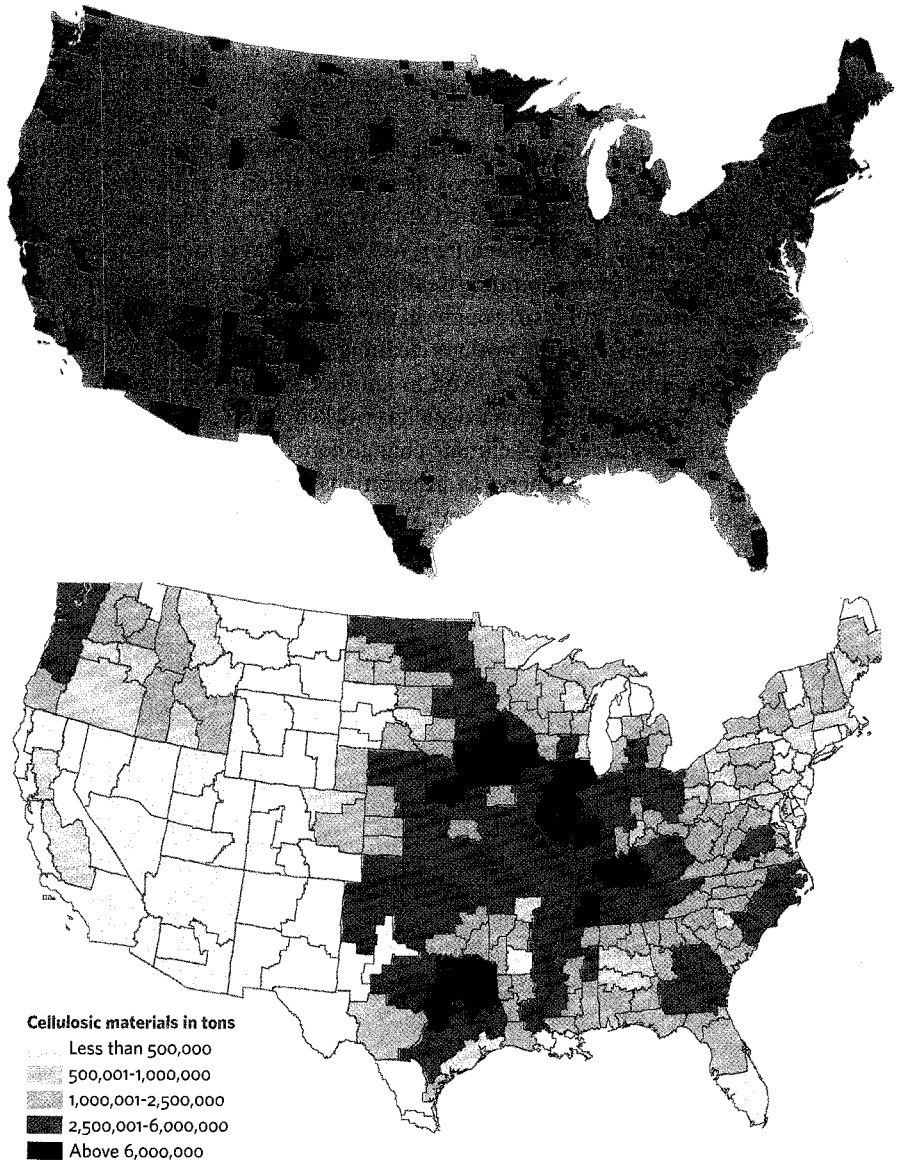
litical iceberg that has been quietly building for several years. They represent a shift not just on energy policy, but on the politics of how we build our economy, where we invest as a society, and what public benefits we as citizens will demand in return for our votes and for our taxes.

STEPHANIE HERSETH IS SOUTH Dakota's lone member of Congress, and the state's first woman to serve in the U.S. House. She won her seat in a June 2004 special election, and immediately defended it in November of that year. Millions of dollars in out-of-state money flowed into her Great Plains district. The state went easily for Bush by a wide margin; Tom Daschle, the sitting minority leader of the U.S. Senate, was unseated in a startling upset; and Republicans retained their solid grip on the state legislature.

Yet Herseth, daughter of a local corn farmer, was elected with deep support. A centerpiece of her ultimate victory was her unwavering commitment to enacting a renewable fuels standard to require the use of eight billion gallons of ethanol per year. What could have been a minor policy detail was in South Dakota a stand that showed the people what she was about and the agricultural way of life she came from.

She carried the race easily and has become a national champion for homegrown domestic alternatives to oil in Congress, leading the newly formed Rural Working Group in the House, and helping put the issue at the center of the agenda with her Democratic colleagues. In recent months these bread-and-butter rural issues have been advanced by minority leader Nancy Pelosi as the centerpiece of a new Innovation Agenda for America. That farm-state issues are emerging not only as regional priorities, but as core progressive strategies for innovation, national security, and long-term economic growth, is a seismic shift.

As Herseth says, "South Dakotans' livelihoods have always been deeply tied to the land, and many of us look at biofuels as a last chance to save our way of life. If we can shift from growing food to growing energy to sell all over the world, maybe we can ensure that the next generation of farmers and ranchers can stay on the family farm and pass it on to their kids. It's about choice and the ability to live the way we want to live. This is aspirational: as patriotic Americans, we can be part of the solution to one of the biggest problems facing our country by making ourselves energy independent, and we can preserve our way of life in the process."



Prairie promise: Could the nation's solidly red core hold the key to a progressive political revival? Top, county-by-county 2004 presidential election returns. Bottom, regions with crops (namely, cellulosic materials) that could yield enough ethanol to replace 25 percent of U.S. gasoline demand by 2025.

TWO STATES TO THE SOUTH, KATHLEEN SEBELIUS, THE governor of Kansas, is favored to win reelection in 2006. As a popular Democrat in Kansas, an epicenter of the religious right, she is a rising star among Democratic governors. Perhaps not coincidentally, Governor Sebelius has recently taken over the helm of the bipartisan Governors' Ethanol Coalition. Governor Sebelius has placed her bets on farm-based energy as a major tool for rebuilding the future of her state's economy. As farm incomes have fallen and aerospace jobs have fled for cheaper labor markets, she sees new value-added production and good manufacturing jobs in the growing calls for energy independence through ethanol and wind.

Down-ballot, Raj Goyle, challenger for a long-held Republican state legislature seat in Wichita, declares, "Clean energy means new technology that puts machinists back to work in Wichita making rotors and turbines, and it means new rev-

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enue for farmers supplying electricity and fuel to a nation that's nearing an energy crisis." To Kansans like Sebelius and Goyle, this is just common sense and a smart business decision for America; it's also good politics.

And it is not just in Republican farm-belt states that progressive leaders are using energy politics to offer a better vision of the economic future. In the swing state of Pennsylvania, Governor Ed Rendell has passed a far-reaching renewable energy law that not only committed the commonwealth to significant markets for solar and wind, but also brought in the coal industry, offering jobs for unionized mine workers cleaning up waste coal to produce new energy resources. And in another swing state, New Mexico, Governor Bill Richardson has worked with other Western governors to connect climate change concerns, renewable power, and alternative energy to an ambitious agenda for Western regional economic development. While in the Senate—building on ground first tilled by progressive Democrats like Iowan Tom Harkin and South Dakotan Tom Daschle—a new generation of Democrats from Barack Obama to Hillary Clinton are staking their leadership claims on this issue.

Heartland progressives like Henry Wallace would have found the split between economic interest and moral values incomprehensible. Their vision was rooted in core American principles of liberty, prosperity, and reward for hard work.

The trend has a Republican flipside, too. Defining a big vision on energy has helped Republican governors in decidedly "blue" Massachusetts, New York, and California show their difference from backward-looking national conservatives, often through collaboration with Democrats. Governors in these states have used ambitious clean energy programs to demonstrate leadership on technology, jobs, security, economic development, and environmental stewardship. By doing so, they have helped transcend the bitter polarization of American politics.

THERE IS INDEED SOMETHING STIRRING IN THE GREAT Plains and the Mountain West, in the Sunbelt, the Midwest farm belt, and the nation's industrial heartland. In a country so cleanly split in two between equal and competing political camps, it has become increasingly easy to take for granted permanent red and blue lines of polarization. But it would be a mistake to believe our nation is fundamentally divided on its essential definition, when under the surface there is such complex unease and a building potential for rapid realignment. A deep hunger for change and meaningful debate is afoot in America today, just beneath the predictable cynicism of politics as usual. And it's perhaps strongest in red-state America, where the economic pain and vulnerability of the present moment is most palpable.

You can see the tension in all the polling—the president's falling approval rating is coupled with the paradoxical failure of Democrats to pick up gains; anger over corruption in Congress is pitted against distress over a general coarsening of media culture; frustration with high salaries for corporate CEOs is braced by an equal sense that personal morality and ethics are in decline. The old politics just don't seem to fit. The old battle lines fail to describe the current problems and are hopelessly weak at offering solutions that are likely to do any good. It is little wonder then, with so little to hope for, and so few champions, that the country is starkly divided on how to proceed.

Thomas Frank wrote about this in *What's the Matter with Kansas?* He put his finger on the political movement of heartland voters toward tough stands on moral values, and correctly identified it as an effort to address a creeping discomfort with a culture and an economic system that's ever more insecure and uncaring for the fate of average folks. Yet it would be a mistake to understand this debate as a split between one camp focused on "moral values" and another offering "economic self-interest." This view misses the real core of the tension for most voters in America today. In truth, our economic problems and our values crises are deeply intertwined and lead us back to a crisis in our national sense of purpose. The malaise of rural poverty, a diminishing manufacturing employment base, and the creeping low-road culture of Wal-Mart jobs with discount wages all contribute to the deepening fear and insecurity driving our economic, political, and ethical landscape.

Instead, Americans are looking for some way to reconcile their moral concerns with their economic insecurity, to create a vision for the country and the world that they can believe in again, a vision that offers both prosperity and justice, that makes us all safer, and restores the chance for an ennobling future. What appears today to be two competing ideologies, one red and one blue, one based on moral values and one on populist economic theories, instead could just as easily be the sign of one nation searching for deeper answers, waiting to come together around real leadership and a real vision of a future that marries these equally pressing national imperatives, in order to build an economy with meaning, compassion, justice, and hope.

The candidate or party that first steps forward to articulate such a bold and unifying vision, backed by a strong commitment and clear priorities, will really have something to run on, something that can break the Gordian knot of the last few elections. Rather than making only tactical and cautious plays for the narrow and vacillating middle, the party that steps forward with a dynamic agenda just might find a country every bit as willing to produce a landslide as it has been to cast votes for paper-thin margins of victory.

LOOKING OUT ACROSS THE VAST DIVIDE OF TODAY'S red- and blue-state America, it's important to remember that America's heartland has not always been the center of conservative thought. It was red-state America that gave birth to the populist movement. A radical agrarian agenda swept like

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wildfire out of Texas and across the rural west of Oklahoma, Kansas, and Missouri, mobilized around issues of debt, investment, and giving working farmers an ownership stake in the future of the nation. Later it was a revolt by heartland progressives like Iowan John L. Lewis that gave America an industrial labor movement, coming up with innovations that merged ethics and economics, like child labor laws, overtime protection, and the weekend. And it was the heartland instinct to view the economy through a moral lens that led another Iowan, Henry A. Wallace, to fight for a progressive vision of government that regulated corporate abuse in the name of the public interest, that buffered economic cycles to keep family farmers on their land, and that built a social compact to keep the elderly out of poverty.

Consistently throughout our history, red-state America has articulated a deeply moral vision of the American economy, rooted in the practical ethics of working men and women. Often grounded in religious teachings and respect for the value of work and thrift—and fueled by a deep concern for the common man—these leaders and their movements helped articulate an economic theory that counterposed Wall Street's market fundamentalism to Main Street's need for investment, fair rules, and a level playing field in order to grow a great nation out of the wilderness.

The original heartland progressives like Henry Wallace would have found the split between economic self-interest and moral values incomprehensible. Theirs was a pragmatic but deeply moral vision grounded in the long-term self-interest of the nation, an economic vision rooted in core American principles of liberty, widely shared prosperity, reward for hard work, and equality of opportunity. This reform platform had as its bedrock a belief in science and playing by the rules, and it reorganized American politics and priorities. It was this prairie populism—a mainstream American notion of opportunity and possibility—that created new coalitions and a new base of political power, that linked the interests of farmers and mechanics, grange members and recent immigrants, around a constantly improving future unfolding in the crucible of a dynamic American economy founded on liberty, equality, and justice.

Today, amid the current ferment of political anger and dissatisfaction, it is possible to discern once again the potential for a similar emerging realignment around a political agenda that features investment, good government, and the belief in progress. It is also not surprising that clean energy is at the center of this political reframing. For our energy problems have clear and credible solutions at hand, offering a political program with hope at its root and the chance to side with the future and to clarify for voters what our leaders stand for.

National polling bears out this potential. A 2005 national survey by Democracy Corps found 57 percent of U.S. voters "much more likely" to back a candidate who supported an Apollo-style crash program to promote clean energy and reduce dependence on imported oil. That result was stronger than responses on prescription drugs, health care, pensions, jobs, or the economy, and was beaten only by support for education, an issue that also captures our hope for the future. Similar findings can be seen in polling by the Renewable Fuels Association, which shows consistent support of 70 percent or higher across nearly all ages and regions of the country for extending policies that invest in biofuels and alternatives to oil. Furthermore, Democracy Corps polls show that oil company corruption, like Halliburton's attempts to influence the federal energy bill, has a more galvanizing negative reaction than any other issue tested.

In the current political moment, the move to clean renewable energy is that rarest of issues, one that represents not only good politics but great policy as well. Governor Schweitzer captures this truth in a story.

After a recent speech to a Montana audience, the visiting U.S. undersecretary of agriculture took questions from the audience. Governor Schweitzer was allowed to pose the first question. The United States currently spends $6 billion a year to subsidize the grains we export, Schweitzer began. Farmers then give 40 percent of the price of their crops to the railroads to ship the grain to port; multinational corporations then use more energy to ship the grain to the Third World to sell it below the production costs of subsistence farmers driving them out of business, Schweitzer continued. We then send boats full of oil back across the ocean, with oil and grain tankers passing each other somewhere on the high seas. The unloaded oil is then refined and shipped back to rural America, where farmers again pick up the cost of freight. With farmers losing their land at home and abroad, energy prices out of control, and new threats to our security, Schweitzer concluded, shouldn't we just invest that $6 billion a year in the production of oil seed, help farmers own a piece of refineries, and break our addiction to oil?

To which the U.S. undersecretary of agriculture replied: "Next!"

In the year 2000 there was no energy plank in the Democratic platform. It wasn't seen as a Democratic issue and was addressed only as a subset of the environment in terms of global warming and air pollution. In 2004 not only was energy treated to its own section, it ran as a theme throughout the platform. Freedom from oil was one of the four pillars of the national security plan that dominated the Democrats' program, clean and efficient energy was put forward as a tool for investing in small business and restoring communities, and the promotion of a renewables industry was a centerpiece of the strategy for rebuilding America's manufacturing base.

With the American people feeling increasingly under siege, and our national economy increasingly threadbare, it just might be that this country is finally ready for another dose of that commonsense prairie populism, and an economy that builds prosperity by investing in its people. If our leaders don't get busy serving up a real agenda, it might be that in 2008, it will be the voters saying, "Next!" **TAP**

Bracken Hendricks *is a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress. He was executive director of the Apollo Alliance and served in the Clinton administration.*

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Fueling the Future

BY SENATOR BARACK OBAMA

"The fuel of the future is going to come from fruit like that sumach out by the road, or from apples, weeds, sawdust—almost anything. There is fuel in every bit of vegetable matter that can be fermented. There's enough alcohol in one year's yield of an acre of potatoes to drive the machinery necessary to cultivate the fields for a hundred years."

THIS PRESCIENT VISION OF AN America where homegrown biofuels replace oil as our primary source of energy wasn't uttered by a scientist or an environmentalist. It wasn't offered by some politician or interest group advocate.

It was the vision of an automaker. His name was Henry Ford, and the year was 1925.

Even then, during the earliest days of the auto industry, there was a widespread belief within the business that the cars we drive could be powered by the food we grow. Ford went so far as to build his first Model T so that it could run on ethanol. As oil soon became the nation's dominant fuel, however, this visionary auto was scrapped—and with it, Ford's dream of an oil-free future.

More than 80 years later, America's addiction to oil makes it clear that we have to go back to that future. Doing so won't just free us from our dependence on a dangerous and finite fossil fuel, it will also rejuvenate an industry desperate for another chance.

Henry Ford's corporation now finds itself struggling to survive under stiff competition, rising health-care costs, and the consumer skittishness that comes from volatile oil prices. Together, GM and Ford recently announced plans to lay off up to 60,000 workers.

Across the globe, other countries and their auto industries are realizing the enormous potential of a post-oil economy. Toyota is doubling production of the popular hybrid Prius, and it's readying a new production plant in China. Waiting lists for these foreign hybrids in our own country are months long, but U.S. automakers lag far behind.

There is now no doubt that cars that use less oil represent the future of the auto industry. If U.S. car companies hope to be a part of that future—if they hope to survive—they must start building more of these cars. And we must help them do it.

Right now, one of the biggest costs facing auto manufacturers is health care. Last year, retiree health care alone cost the Big 3 automakers nearly $6.7 billion. No wonder they're having trouble finding the money to invest in fuel-efficient cars.

I believe we should make a deal with the auto companies to solve this problem. Legislation I've introduced called "Health Care for Hybrids" would allow the federal government to pick up part of the tab for the automakers' retiree health-care costs. In exchange, the companies would use some of that savings to build and invest in more fuel-efficient cars. It's a win-win proposal: Their retirees will be taken care of, they'll save dramatically on health costs, and they'll be free to invest in the fuel-efficient cars that are key to their competitive future.

Within a decade, every car sold in the United States should be able to run on flexible fuel.

BUT BUILDING CARS that use less oil is only one side of the equation. The other involves replacing that oil with the homegrown biofuels Henry Ford spoke of long ago.

Already, hundreds of fueling stations use a blend of ethanol and gasoline known as E85, and there are millions of cars on the road with the flexible-fuel tanks necessary to use this fuel—including my own. But the challenge we face is getting biofuels out of the labs, out of the farms, and into the wider commercial market.

Washington can help in important ways. First, we can reduce the risk of investing by providing loan guarantees and venture capital to entrepreneurs with the best plans to develop and sell biofuels on a commercial market.

Next, we tell the private sector there will always be a market for renewable fuels. Let's ramp up the renewable fuel standard and create an alternative diesel standard so that by 2025, 65 billion gallons of alternative fuels a year will be blended into the petroleum supply.

Third, every automobile the government purchases—starting right now—should be a flexible-fuel vehicle. When it becomes possible in the coming years, we should also mandate that every government car is the type of hybrid that you can plug in to an outlet and recharge.

More broadly, we should then ensure that, within a decade, every new car sold in America can run on flexible fuel. We can advance this goal by offering manufacturers a $100 tax credit for every flexible-fuel tank they install before the decade is up.

As my friend Tom Daschle details in this report, millions of people driving flexible-fuel vehicles don't even know it. The auto companies shouldn't get CAFE credit for making these cars if they don't let buyers know about them, so the entire auto industry should follow GM's lead and put a yellow gas cap on all flexible fuel vehicles, and notify consumers in writing as well.

We have a choice in this country. We can continue down our path of oil dependence and watch as foreign competition kills our auto industry. Or we can help the industry transform itself back into the giant it once was. Eighty years later, Henry Ford's dream of a future without oil is not only possible, it's essential. For our environment, our security, and our economy, it's finally time for America to pursue it. **TAP**

***Barack Obama**, a Democrat, is the junior U.S. Senator from Illinois.*

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Good Genes Gone Bad

The new public health reflects our understanding of how environmental contaminants damage genes. New genetic science offers new hope.

BY PETE MYERS

SCARCELY A WEEK GOES BY WITHOUT COVERAGE OF a new discovery by scientists revealing that yet another disease is linked to one or another gene. The range of health conditions now known to be gene related is astonishing. Some are just what you would have expected 50 years ago: many cancers, birth defects, obscure metabolic disorders, and diabetes. Others are less obvious, for example, brain disorders like schizophrenia, Parkinson's disease, and Alzheimer's disease.

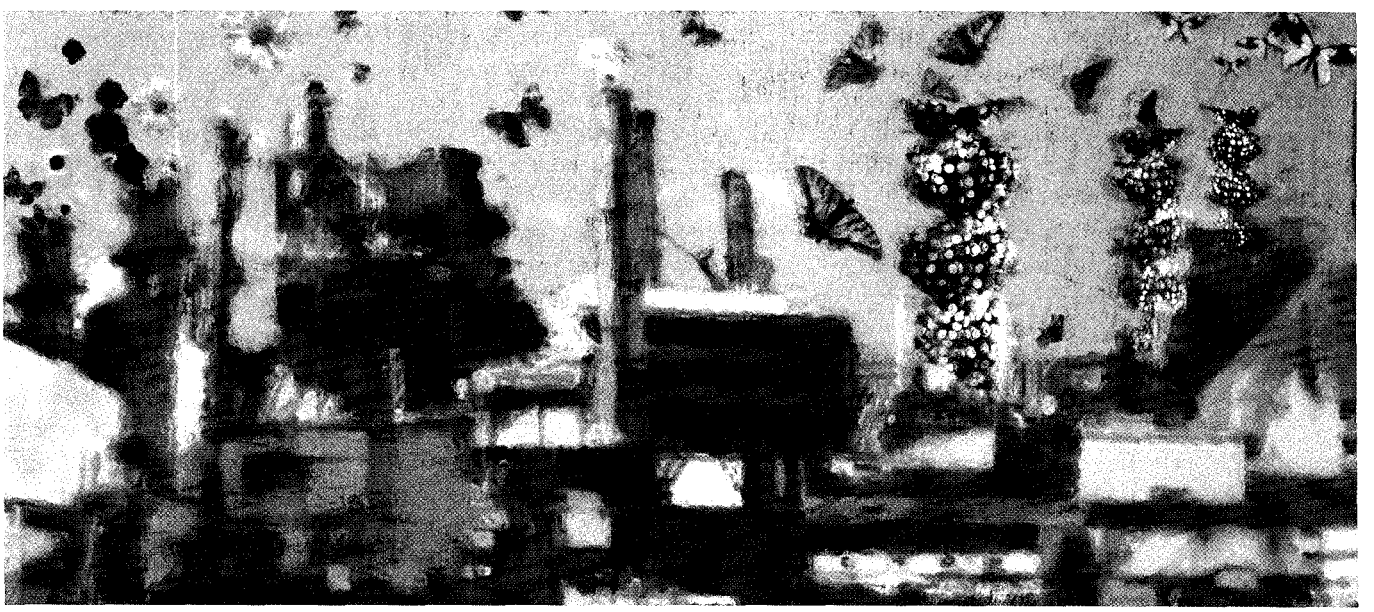
Most people react to this news—disease linked to genes—as yet another confirmation of life's capriciousness. Genes are what we got from our parents. If we're lucky, we get the good genes, and that means at least one health condition that won't burden us in life, compound the toll of growing old, or hurry us toward the grave. If we aren't lucky, well then, who ever said life is fair?

In the medical community and pharmaceutical industry, findings like these are fueling a rush in search of cures using "gene therapy." If the experts can figure out what's wrong with a gene, well, perhaps a designer drug can fix it.

But one corner of science reacts quite differently, flipping the old "nature vs. nurture," or "genes vs. environment" dichotomy on its head. In this corner, when a disease is linked to a gene, the research question shifts to a completely different perspective: What contaminants in the environment could be altering the behavior of that gene?

In other words, diseases linked to genes aren't simply the fatalistic results of inheritance. Diseases can also be the result of *good* genes gone *bad* because of interference from something in the environment. Rather than inviting exotic medical interventions, diseases caused by environmental interference with gene behavior may be preventable if the contaminant can be identified and the exposure eliminated. And please note that this isn't about mutation. The DNA sequence doesn't change. It isn't originally a "bad" gene, but rather one that's been hijacked.

This perspective does more than simply shift the boundaries of what is known as "environmentally caused disease." It reframes the issue entirely. Classically, we have perceived diseases and disabilities as having distinctly genetic *or* environmental causes, or perhaps having a contribution from both due to mutation or some interaction between heredity and environ-



McDAVID HENDERSON

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ment (as in some mental illnesses), and we have labored hard to sort out blame. This new perspective says something very different: Yes, we do inherit our genes from our parents, but the environment—including diet, experience and contamination—can alter how a specific gene behaves throughout life.

That new understanding holds immense promise for public health. It means that revelations by genetic research of "diseases linked to genes" aren't a litany of fatalism. Instead they are a compilation of diseases that may have environmental etiologies and can thus be candidates for prevention through exposure reduction. Not all diseases with a genetic basis will work this way, but the list will very likely be large and will include some profoundly important illnesses.

To make sense of this new framing—what it means for a disease to be linked to a gene—requires three pieces of information: two that form the core of modern molecular genetics, and a third that has emerged from new scientific discovery over the past two decades.

Exposure to substances at high doses can be toxic—outright poisonous. But extremely low doses of environmental contaminants can cause gene damage.

First, just as Gregor Mendel discovered in the late 1800s, you inherit genetic material from your parents. Decades of research during the 20th century then led to the discovery that genes are pieces of DNA in your chromosomes.

Second, genes aren't just passive strands of DNA but, instead, are part of nature's nanotechnology. They are tiny chemical manufacturing plants controlled by an intricate and dynamic set of chemical messengers that travel within and between cells to turn specific genes on, or off, at the proper time. When geneticists talk about gene behavior, they are referring to how a gene is turned on to set the steps in motion that lead to protein synthesis or other key changes in cell function. There are many variations of this process. In one scenario, involving hormones like testosterone and estrogen, the hormone molecule arrives from outside the cell, goes into the nucleus, and binds with another molecule called a receptor. This bound complex then controls the activity of the gene.

This process begins before conception in the formation of eggs and sperm and it continues through death. It is the molecular symphony of life, with 20,000-plus genes in each human cell, turning on and off as molecular signals reach the switch on a gene that controls its action. Different genes respond to different signals, yet the same gene in different tissues can also be programmed quite differently. That's why even though all the cells in a person's body have the same genes and we each have many different types of tissues, one body part takes on the characteristics of an eye and another a finger or a liver or a brain. And while changes in gene expression take place at the molecular level, they have a huge impact on a person's life. When working properly, those changes give you male or female sex organs, a functional brain, and an immune system that defends against disease. They regulate weight and protect you from cancers. In short, the right changes in gene expression as the fetus is growing are essential to a person's health and quality of life.

Third, some environmental contaminants can interfere with gene expression, preventing genes from turning on when you need them, or turning them on when they should be silent. Take arsenic. At high levels, arsenic kills outright. At intermediate doses, arsenic is associated with a wide array of illnesses. At truly low doses—10 parts per billion, the new standard for drinking water in the United States—experiments with cells indicate that arsenic can prevent some genes from being turned on by glucocorticoid hormones. These hormones control genes important for disease resistance, glucose metabolism, and a number of other vital processes. Some of these genes make proteins that are important for tumor suppression, for example. These effects were discovered as a result of experiments conducted using cells in a laboratory setting. Still, the results suggest that if the same processes are at work in people—which is likely—then people exposed to arsenic at that low dose may be ill-prepared to fight tumors. Arsenic in this case isn't causing illness directly, but it is instead setting the stage for illness to win over health. The arsenic's contribution undermines disease resistance by preventing protective genes from being turned on.

A key finding is that gene hijacking can take place at extremely low—almost undetectable—levels of exposure to some environmental chemicals. Exposure to high doses of many substances can be outright toxic—poisonous in the classic sense. Historically, toxicologists have bowed to the mantra "the dose makes the poison." But with low-dose exposures, the mechanism of action is different. It isn't a simple case of outright toxicity in which the more of a poison you take, the greater the toxic effect. Gene hijacking during fetal development can be like shifting the course of an ocean liner two degrees at the beginning of a voyage. Over a thousand-mile trip (or a 70-year life span), you wind up in a very different port. Or you may crash onto rocky shores. For example, in a fetus or infant, a subtle change in the path of development can lead to an immune system that can't resist common bacteria or that responds hyperactively, as in the case of asthma. A female fetus exposed in the womb can wind up with a uterus that isn't shaped properly; a male fetus may mature with a permanently low sperm count.

Our genes are vulnerable to hijacking throughout life. But fetal development and the period from childhood through puberty are the most vulnerable stages of life. This has taken on additional significance as work on gene hijacking has converged with another new field in the health sciences, "developmental origins of adult disease." This work, which has roots in both animal and human studies, is revealing that many chronic illnesses and health conditions experienced by adults

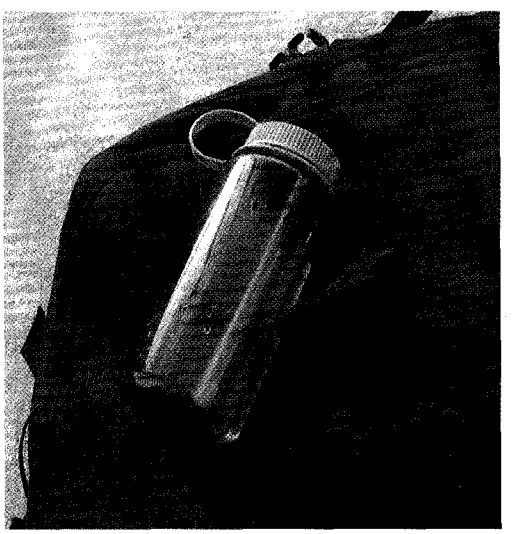
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can have their origins in early development gone awry.

One early signal of the important role fetal events play in the onset of adult disease was revealed due to the discovery, in 1971, that young women who had been exposed in the womb to a drug called diethylstilbestrol, or DES, developed a rare cancer in their late teens. Another came from research showing that adults whose mothers were starved in the third trimester of pregnancy are prone to obesity and other chronic problems, including heart disease, in adulthood. A third has emerged over the last decade as it has become clear that most cases of testicular cancer arise from failure of tissues within the fetal testes to differentiate properly. These undifferentiated tissues lie dormant for two to three decades and then turn into tumors. Research published in 2005 has even shown that a gene implicated in Alzheimer's, a disease of old age, may be vulnerable to hijacking around the time of birth. This work, done with rodents exposed to low levels of lead, shows that the gene behaves normally through adulthood, but in old age it's activated to an abnormally high level. The same study also showed that exposing an adult to the same low amount of lead doesn't have this effect.

The poster-child molecule for this reframing of links between environment and health is one that almost no one has heard of, but that almost everyone has in their tissues and fluids. That molecule is bisphenol A, invented in 1891 by the Russian chemist A.P. Dianin and discovered in 1936 to cause responses similar to those of the natural hormone estrogen. That discovery took place during the rush of pharmaceutical research to find synthetic estrogens, and bisphenol A, or BPA, lost out to its more powerful cousin, DES. While DES went on to be used by millions of women to control difficult pregnancies before it was outed as a cancer-causing agent, bisphenol A was put on the shelf until a polymer chemist discovered around 1950 that it could be combined in chains to make polycarbonate plastic and certain epoxy resins. Use since that discovery has skyrocketed, to the point that over six billion pounds are synthesized each year and the molecule is now included in countless consumer products.

Ironically, one of the most conspicuous of these uses is the transparent plastic water bottles, often tinted bright colors, which are wild favorites on campuses, strapped to countless backpacks of health-conscious Generation X members who've been told the material is safe because it is rigid and doesn't smell like plastic or leach dioxin. True, these bottles don't leach dioxin. That was never the concern. But they do leach bisphenol A because the chemical bonds that create the polymer easily degrade in water—and they do so even faster if the plastic gets hot or is exposed to alcohol, soaps, or acids. BPA exposure comes from many other sources, for example, in a resin used to line metal food cans, from which it also leaches.



Clean Water: But watch that bottle.

REUBEN DALKE

TODAY ALMOST ALL PEOPLE SAMPLED IN THE DEVELoped world have bisphenol A in their body at trace levels (in the low parts per billion), including in amniotic fluid, umbilical cord blood, and placental tissue. A Centers for Disease Control study in 2005 detected low amounts of BPA in the urine of 95 percent of Americans sampled. Twenty years ago scientists would have looked at those levels and scoffed: too low to make a difference. Indeed, back then these levels were too low to even measure. But since 1997, well over 200 articles have been published in the peer-reviewed scientific literature showing that BPA has a biological impact on cells and animals at levels beneath the current federal standards, which were based on data gathered in the early 1980s. In cells, BPA has been shown to alter vital genetic signaling pathways at under one part per trillion. In animals, effects have been reported at less than one part per billion.

Significantly, *all* of the reports of major effects come from government or academic studies, while none of the 12 studies funded by industry has reported harm. And independent analyses of those 12 reveal not only fatal flaws in experimental design, but outright misrepresentation of data. As recently as January 2006, industry scientists used these very studies and misrepresentations to argue during a hearing convened by the California legislature that BPA is safe. One "product-defense" firm testifying in those hearings, the D.C.-based Weinberg Group, was revealed by an investigative report published in February 2006 to have its roots in defending tobacco and aggressively soliciting business from companies whose materials are under attack because of health and safety concerns. One of the firm's most recent clients is a company that manufactures a Teflon chemical judged by an EPA science advisory board in early 2006 to be a likely human carcinogen.

The list of diseases and adverse health conditions now plausibly linked to bisphenol A by animal and cell research is large and reflects disease trends in the human population. It runs from reduced sperm count to spontaneous miscarriages; from prostate and breast cancers to degenerative brain diseases; from attention deficit disorders to obesity and insulin resistance, which links it to Type 2 diabetes. "Plausibly" is a long way from "certainly." Even if it accounts for only some percentage, say 10 percent or 20 percent, of cases, these "plausibly linked" conditions have been caused by exposure to BPA. And those are cases that could have been prevented and health-care costs that could have been avoided.

How does one molecule contribute to so much suffering? Research shows that BPA alters the behavior of over 200 genes, more than one percent of all human genes. The genes affected

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aren't controlling minor traits like eye color. They are genes involved centrally in how cells multiply, how stem cells become more specialized, how metabolism is regulated, and how the brain gets wired as a fetus grows. It is not at all surprising, therefore, to see so many potential links to health problems.

Because of the extremely low levels at which BPA has demonstrable effects, this molecule is at the center of the debate over low-level contamination, gene expression, and human health, but it is by no means alone. It is but one of hundreds of synthetic chemicals that have been found to alter gene behavior. Some are compounds that have been of concern for decades, like dioxins, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and certain pesticides. Others, like phthalates, Teflon-related chemicals, and brominated flame retardants, have been attracting attention more recently, especially because they are present in consumer products in every home in America; hence, exposure is ubiquitous. The United States has made good—but incomplete—progress on the former, but for too many, particularly in the latter group, the work has barely begun.

What do these results mean for human health? Scientists aren't certain because despite 50 years of growing use of BPA in commerce, there have been almost no human studies. The chemical industry takes the "absence of proof of harm in humans" as evidence of safety rather than simply a result of the fact that almost no one has investigated the matter, even though there is extensive evidence of harm in other animals. The preceding list of plausible links includes conditions that have become epidemics over the past several decades, the same time frame during which exposure to BPA became virtually unavoidable. Those trends are what you would predict from the animal studies, but a lot of other things in our world have also changed, so the congruence of trends proves nothing by itself. Definitive human studies can take decades to complete, especially if the focus is on something as complex as adult diseases caused by developmental exposure. Only one study has attempted to test predictions based on the recent animal research involving BPA, and it confirmed the prediction, but the study was small and needs to be repeated.

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development has spent tens of millions of dollars over the past five years planning a study that would track 100,000 subjects from conception to age 21. Patterned after a famous and highly productive study of cardiovascular health called the Framingham Heart Study, the National Children's Study would examine many different factors affecting development, including environmental chemicals and diet. This sweeping scale of research is required scientifically to reach firm conclusions about which products are safe and which are not. Unfortunately, President Bush's proposed budget for 2007 has eliminated funding.

THE UNITED STATES HAS ALREADY DEMONSTRATED AN ability to reduce harmful exposures dramatically through stronger public-health standards. Exposure to lead, PCBs, hexachlorobenzene, and other contaminants is now at much lower levels than it was 40 years ago. The newer contaminants, like BPA (in principle), are no less amenable to policy intervention, but corporations and their "product defense" consultants are now far more sophisticated about battling government efforts to strengthen public-health standards, making it ever harder for agencies to keep the standards up-to-date with current science. For example, BPA's current standard is based upon data gathered in the mid-1980s.

Two new sources of opportunities to reduce harmful exposure are "green chemistry" and the marketplace for safer products. By paying attention to the molecular detail of how contaminants cause harm, chemists can invent new materials that are harmless by molecular design. BPA causes harm because of coincidence: Its shape fits into the estrogen receptor. Minor changes in that structure should yield a molecule that can be used to make similar plastics, but that won't alter gene expression. Entrepreneurial companies, seeing potential profits in inherently safe products, are actively involved in bringing such products to market.

Until the early 20th century, the United States was wracked with waves of epidemics, mostly of infectious diseases. Most of those were finally controlled through public-health interventions, especially better water treatment, not through antibiotics or even vaccines. Huge public investments were made, even though the science wasn't definite. Those investments changed the face of public health in this country. We have clean drinking water, and sewage systems that work (most of the time). And today very few people die from waterborne diseases in the United States.

Today's epidemics are very different. They involve cancers, cardiovascular problems, and metabolic syndrome (obesity and Type 2 diabetes), and in the young they include some serious behavioral problems like attention disorders and autism. These epidemics have obvious human costs, and they burden the economy. The medical conditions that would have been studied by the National Children's Study cost the United States $640 billion annually.

If today's epidemics continue along the trend lines that have emerged over the past 30 years, it is likely that this generation of children will be the first in modern history to have less healthy adult lives than those of their parents. Changes in gene expression play a significant role in virtually all of them. It is highly likely that some percentage is caused by exposure to contaminants. Those epidemics, in principle, can be prevented. As this science advances, and as people, government, and companies act upon these developments, it is possible to envision a transformation in public health just as radical, and positive, as that achieved when society cleaned its water of infectious-disease agents. **TAP**

Pete Myers *is founder, CEO, and chief scientist of Environmental Health Sciences in Charlottesville, Virginia. Former director of the W. Alton Jones Foundation, he is a coauthor of* Our Stolen Future *(1996), which explores the threats posed by man-made chemical contaminants to fetal development and human health. For more, see www.EnvironmentalHealthNews.org.*

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Follow the Farmers

BY TOM DASCHLE

TWENTY YEARS AGO, ON A FARM OUTSIDE MY HOMEtown of Aberdeen, South Dakota, I stood with a few dozen local corn growers in a machine shack, huddled around a still. We were trying to show the farmers that their crops could be turned into what we then called gasohol—a liquid fuel that could become our country's transportation fuel of choice. Farmers immediately understood the power of ethanol, and they have brought us to the point where energy independence is in sight. Now the rest of us need to do our part.

Today, the ethanol industry is responsible for creating 200,000 jobs and reducing our need for foreign oil by 3.1 billion gallons per year. Within a decade, it will achieve twice those amounts—proof positive there are sources of energy right here in America if only we invest in the technology, seize the potential, and innovate our way out of dependence on foreign oil. If we're serious about that goal, we need to build a "hybrid economy"—one powered by homegrown energy sources, whether it's gasified coal, ethanol, or wind and solar power.

As we learned in the barn late that night, farmers have done their part. Now it's President Bush's turn. In his State of the Union address, the president recognized our national addiction to oil, but his actions since then have spoken louder than his words. In fact, the president's budget includes more funding for research and development for oil companies—at a time of record profits for those companies—than it does for innovation in non-oil biofuels.

The recently passed Energy Policy Act provides numerous opportunities for the government to support innovation in other American-made renewable fuels, including new forms of ethanol from crops grown not just in the Midwest but across the country. These are opportunities for innovation that, as with genome research, can be accelerated with modest government support to ensure solutions are market-ready long before they would be otherwise. Republican and Democratic governors across the country are now rightly calling on Congress to do what the president did not: to fully fund innovation in next year's budget.

While the president and Congress can ensure that we invest in innovation, automakers can ensure that we turn that innovation into action. Today, there are about 4.5 million flexible fuel vehicles on America's roads. Those vehicles are engineered to use "E85", a homegrown gas blend that is 85 percent ethanol and is equal or superior to conventional gasoline in terms of performance and cost.

The problem is that far too few consumers who own these cars even know they can burn E85. And those who are aware find that they have very few opportunities to actually purchase the fuel: Barely 600 of the nearly 180,000 retail gas stations nationwide offer E85, due largely to major oil company interference. The oil companies must be forced to stop their anti-competitive practice of prohibiting E85 dispensers from being installed at their stations—by federal law, if necessary.

What good is this innovative technology if barriers like this exist? That is why our automakers—who revolutionized manufacturing with the invention of the assembly line—should notify every customer whose vehicle has the technology to use E85. If we can contact customers to tell them something is wrong with their cars, we can surely contact them to tell them something is right.

At the same time, automakers should follow the lead of market innovators like General Motors and each announce now that their entire fleet will be E85-ready by 2010. At present, it costs roughly $50 per car to make sure that automobiles rolling off the assembly line are ready to use E85. I am confident our automakers can soon bring that price down dramatically.

This effort should not fall solely to the government or Detroit. Though traditional investment houses have been reluctant to embrace ethanol, Wall Street is beginning to learn what farmers have long known. In fact, *The Wall Street Journal* recently reported that the leading salesman for ethanol's profitability is Silicon Valley's Vinod Khosla, venture capitalist extraordinaire and founder of Sun Microsystems Inc.

Lastly, our friends in the environmental community have come a long way in recognizing the potential of biofuels, and we need to build on that progress. There is no better option to decrease petroleum use in the nation's transportation sector and to do it now. At the same time, ethanol has been proven to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. And at least one recent study demonstrates that we could meet all our transportation fuel needs in 2050 without increasing the amount of land currently in cultivation.

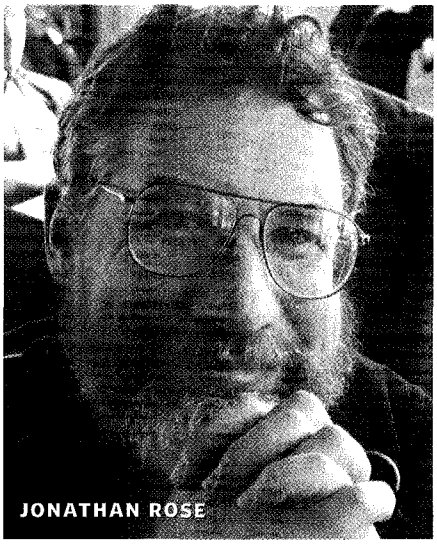
Energy independence is our shared national goal. If we each do our part, we can meet that goal with biofuels from America's farms—and help the environment, the economy, and our nation's cherished agricultural tradition in the process. **TAP**

***Tom Daschle**, the former Democratic Leader of the U.S. Senate, is currently Special Policy Adviser at Alston & Bird and a Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress in Washington.*

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Building Green

Jonathan Rose Companies LLC is one of America's largest green developers of affordable housing and other ventures, with more than one billion dollars worth of projects under management. Prospect *co-editor Robert Kuttner spoke with CEO Jonathan Rose.*


JONATHAN ROSE

Kuttner: What makes a building "green"?
Rose: For affordable housing, we recommend a level we call "practical green," which is wonderfully described in the Enterprise Foundation's Green Communities program. The U.S. Green Building Council has established the widely used LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) system that rates buildings Certified, Silver, Gold or Platinum. A "certified" building has basic green characteristics: more energy efficiency, fresh air, ample daylight, and low use of toxic materials. When you get into a car, the new car smell comes from volatile organic chemicals (VOCs), which are not good for you. That's the same thing you smell when you live in an apartment with a new carpet or a house that's been repainted. A basic green building won't have VOCs or other toxic materials.

Going up the scale, a "silver" building will be better at water saving, and will include more materials from recycled or rapidly renewable sources, such as bamboo. A "gold" building might incorporate a raised floor system, filtered air or solar panels. A "platinum" building might include more active systems such as purifying and recycling the building's wastewater.

Kuttner: Isn't a lot of the payoff ultimately not just in how you build, but in the whole spatial pattern of development?
Rose: Yes, the most green thing one can do is to locate a building or home or shopping space or school in a walkable community close to mass transportation. The biggest impact on the environment comes from cars. A building "uses" three times as much energy in transporting people to and from the building as is used by the building itself. So if you can locate that building in a downtown, near mass transit, you systemically save huge amounts of energy.

Kuttner: That's plausible in dense cities like Boston, but how do you retro-plan sprawl-America?
Rose: Well, cities across America are now adding light rail. There is tremendous consumer demand to live near light rail stops. Every city that has added light rail in the last 20 years has found that the consumer use has been two or three times the original projections. Los Angeles is densifying, adding heavy rail and light rail, and tremendous higher density development is happening at the rail stops. So if Los Angeles can do it, any community can do it.

Kuttner: What are the main obstacles and inducements to this path generally?
Rose: One challenge used to be putting together a team of architects and particularly mechanical engineers who really understand green building. But the field is growing rapidly. A green building is a much cheaper building to operate and so we are seeing rapid adoption of green buildings in the affordable housing area. Churches and synagogues and mosques see greening as a way to express caring for creation. Hospitals and health-care centers rapidly becoming green, because why should healing environments be intrinsically unhealthy? Studies actually show that the more access patients have to fresh air and daylight, the quicker they heal. As these different elements of society go green, the effect is cumulative. As we get more architects and contractors who know how to build green, they create a demand for green materials, the cost of materials comes down and investment in green material development goes up. So we're in the middle of a rapidly accelerating positive trend. We're also seeing shifts in consumer preference. Some people want suburban sprawl, but more and more want compact, walkable, mixed-use communities.

Kuttner: Isn't federal policy still a story of the starvation of housing and mass transit, the continued subsidizing of gas-guzzling automobiles, and hostility to planning?
Rose: We have never really had a thoughtful national infrastructure policy and we certainly do not have one now. We really need a comprehensive planning approach for water, sewer, gas, electric, telephone, power, data, transportation, education, housing, libraries, and hospitals, that ties them all together in a comprehensive way. We currently have an administration that is trying to de-fund those essential aspects of community.

The current administration is also cutting back on all the affordable housing subsidies and community development block grants that provide basic infrastructure to cities and communities. Unfortunately, the huge federal deficit and declining federal resources to the states are putting pressure on state and local budgets to make up the gap. And the American citizen somehow doesn't yet tie the rise in local taxes to the reduction in federal resources.

Kuttner: Your company is involved in the rebuilding of New Orleans, isn't it?
Rose: Our company is part of the Louisiana Recovery Authority's (LRA) master planning team that is looking at rebuilding all of southern Louisiana post-Katrina/Rita. We're working on both affordable housing issues and the green building issues. If the LRA uses the money well, the results could be extraordinarily exciting. Louisiana and Mississippi, with the inflow of federal funds and the need for comprehensive planning, could actually change the way that regional environmentally based planning is done. **TAP**

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1. Green or "vegetated" roof: Rooftop gardens can help retain and filter stormwater runoff, improve air quality, and provide a natural layer of insulation, promoting energy conservation.

2. Walls and wallboard: Eco-friendly walls can be constructed from any number of renewable products, including agriboard, a mixture of straw, wheat, and agricultural waste. Wallboard is easily produced from grain sorghum or corn, and particle board can be made from rice straw.

3. Windows: Double-glazed panels, windows filled with a viscous gas such as argon or krypton, or panes covered with a reflective coating can dramatically minimize heat loss in cold climates and limit radiant heat during the warmer months.

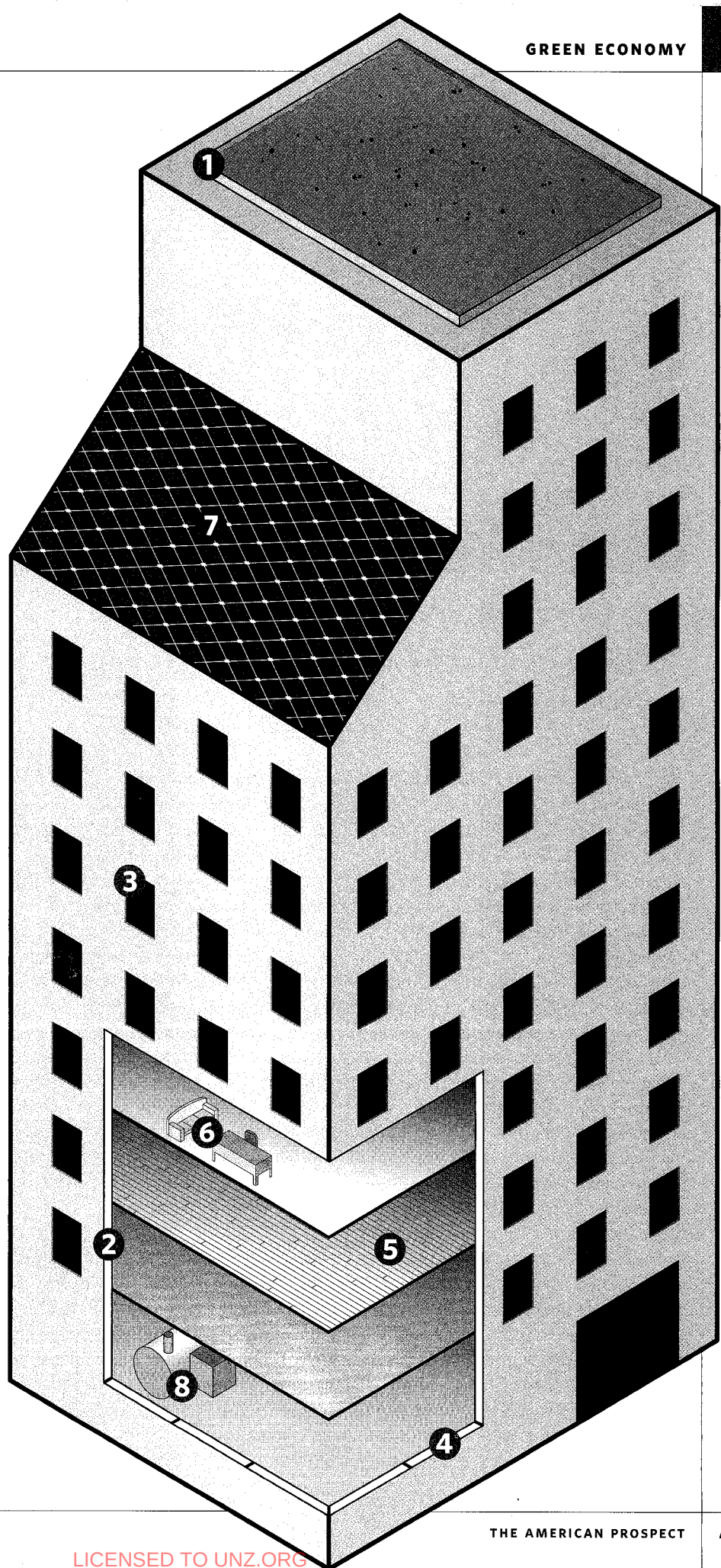
4. Insulation: Manufactured using soybean oil, soy-based insulation contains no formaldehyde or chlorofluorocarbons, harmful organic compounds that deplete the ozone layer and are contained in many brands of conventional insulation.

5. Flooring: A growing market for "environmentally responsible" flooring has led to such options as carpeting composed of bio-based polymers derived from corn, wheat, or other rapidly renewable resources as well as floors of bamboo, which regenerates quickly and can be harvested without killing the plant.

6. Furniture: "Green" furniture may be made from a range of recycled materials, including glass and plastic from milk containers.

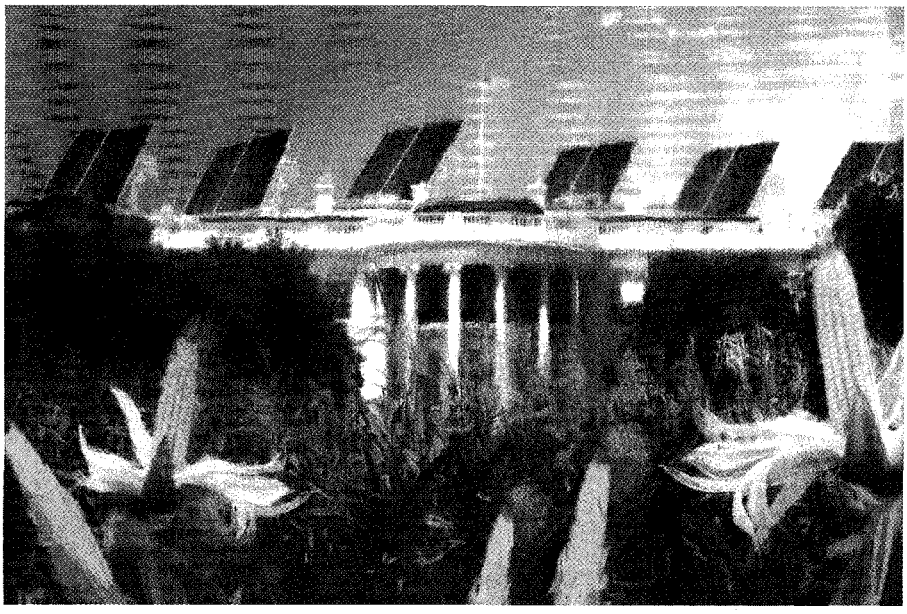
7. Solar panels: An array of photovoltaic panels on the rooftop collect solar energy—an infinitely "renewable" energy source—to serve electricity needs in the building. When electricity needs in the building are low, excess energy can often be sold to the local utility, generating revenue for the building owners.

8. Biodiesel-powered generator: The ultimate "green" building might feature this generator that burns biodiesel made from corn, soybeans, or other bioproducts. It spins turbines that generate electricity, which then powers the entire heating, ventilation and cooling system.



REUBEN DALKE

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Can Government Go Green?

The opportunity is there, but market forces alone won't realize it.

BY MERRILL GOOZNER

If the "mission accomplished" photo-op was the defining moment of the Bush administration's foreign policy, the president's recent visit to the National Renewal Energy Laboratory in Golden, Colorado, defined its energy policy. One week after he embraced alternative energy in his State of the Union address, Bush's budget axed 32 employees at the nation's premier alternative energy lab, a facility that developed key technologies for hybrid cars and photovoltaic cells. His political operatives didn't even know what they had done until a few hours before his visit, triggering a mad scramble to restore the jobs to avoid embarrassing the president.

Too late. Reporters had a field day. But they should have paid more attention to the rest of the administration's proposed federal budget, the ultimate arbiter of national energy policy. Bush's TV rhetoric was disconnected from reality.

Programs that could reduce greenhouse gas emissions and lower U.S. dependence on foreign oil got short shrift. Instead, the president proposed lavishing new resources on long-range research programs that had more to do with rewarding key corporate backers—"clean coal" and nuclear power, as well as corn-based ethanol—than with building a comprehensive, sustainable energy system.

Under the president's plan, home weatherization assistance programs will be cut by nearly a third; investment in geothermal, hydropower, and solar heating and lighting programs will be eliminated; and aid for upgrading local building codes (a key element in improving energy efficiency) will be ended. "The states will now have to become the true laboratories of innovation because the federal budget is not helpful," said New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, who headed the Department of Energy in the Clinton administration.

In the decades since President Jimmy Carter donned a cardigan to declare energy efficiency the moral equivalent of war, the United States has essentially relied on market mechanisms to wean itself from oil. This was a departure from the 1975 Energy Policy Conservation Act, which required automakers to achieve specific fleet averages in miles per gallon. Unfortunately, corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards, which were remarkably successful in achieving their initial goals, were abandoned as a strategy. The CAFE goal was last raised in 1990.

As inflation-adjusted oil and gas prices fell from their 1980s highs, markets responded the way markets do: mindlessly. The U.S. transportation sector became even more dependent on cheap foreign oil; the unanticipated SUV loophole made a mockery of the fuel standards (SUVs are counted under the weaker light-truck standard, not the tougher passenger vehicle one, even though that's how most are used); the electricity sector adopted natural gas as the primary supplement for coal; and the overall economy lagged far behind its European and Japanese rivals in both energy efficiency and adding renewable sources like solar, wind, and geothermal into the energy mix. Concerns about global warming, air pollution, and defense outlays required to maintain access to Middle Eastern oil were ignored.

During the current Bush administration, these trends accelerated. In earlier days, political proponents of alternatives were driven from the national dialogue by an administration with deep personal, political, and financial ties to fossil fuel industries. Vice President Dick Cheney, launching an energy strategy hatched in secret with his energy industry cronies, famously claimed that energy efficiency and alternatives may be signs of "personal virtue" but have no place in the national strategy. Even after 9-11, which presented the nation with a golden opportunity to move down a different energy path, nothing changed.

However, energy markets have belatedly begun to reflect some of the hidden costs of U.S. reliance on fossil fuels. Hurricane Katrina and global warming, instability in many of the oil-producing regions of the world, growing competition for supplies from China and India, and accumulating evidence that the globe has finally reached its peak oil-producing capacity have kept oil more than $60 a barrel and gasoline prices well above $2 a gallon. Home-heating oil and natural gas prices have increased 16 percent and 24 percent, respectively, in the past year.

McDAVID HENDERSON

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Mr. Market is responding to the changed circumstances, sort of. The use of alternatives to oil and gas is exploding. Demand for hybrids, solar installations, and wind power is rising at a 30 percent annual clip. But this consumer-driven response begins from such a small base that it would take decades to push fossil fuels from their preeminent position. Bush's contradictory strategy both promotes more oil exploration and hopes to hasten energy diversification by giving a push to the supply side. At some point, the cost of alternatives, presumably, will fall below the cost of importing oil.

Unfortunately, it's the same strategy that minimalist proponents of energy alternatives and reduced dependence on foreign oil have used for three decades without success. The sunk costs of oil, gas, and coal dependency—the transportation infrastructure, the sprawl, the power plants, the industrial and commercial buildings and processes (not to mention their political influence)—create inertial forces that adjust to every increase in fossil fuel prices the way a frog adjusts to rising water temperatures. It doesn't know that it is cooked until it's too late.

THREE POTENTIALLY POWERFUL political streams could push the government toward more active intervention in energy markets. Labor and its allies have launched an Apollo project to promote the good-jobs and technological potential of alternative energy strategies. Environmentalists continue to sound the alarm about the consequences of global climate change. And in the wake of 9-11, a vocal element within the national security establishment recognizes that breaking the foreign oil habit requires breaking the oil habit entirely. Operating under the umbrella Set America Free Coalition, they responded to the president's speech with a call for "a focus on deployment, not only R&D."

A comprehensive government strategy would proceed on multiple fronts: not just biomass fuels, but higher fuel efficiency standards; not just more research into wind, solar, and geothermal power, but increased state requirements that they be deployed; not just industrial energy efficiency, but higher efficiency standards for lighting, home-heating systems, appliances, weatherization, and building codes. "There is no slam dunk," says Scott Sklar of the Sustainable Energy Coalition.

ENERGY CONSUMPTION IN THE UNITED States can be divided into three distinct sectors: transportation, electricity generation, and the industrial/commercial/residential sectors. Each consumes roughly one-third daily demand for energy. Each requires its own strategy.

Greening the U.S. economy has obvious security and environmental benefits. But it is also a strategy that can provide millions of well-paid jobs for Americans.

In transportation, the United States should raise the CAFE standard while giving the U.S. auto industry a three-year breathing space for retooling. In addition to lifting the SUV/light truck exemption (except for legitimate working vehicles), the fleet average should be raised to 40 miles per gallon (mpg) in 2010, 50 mpg in 2013, and 60 mpg in 2016. Every vehicle coming off the assembly line should, starting in the next model year, be a flexible-fuel vehicle that can run on any type of alcohol or gas-alcohol blend—roughly a $150 per car add-on that will have less impact on the new car market than requiring seat belts and air bags.

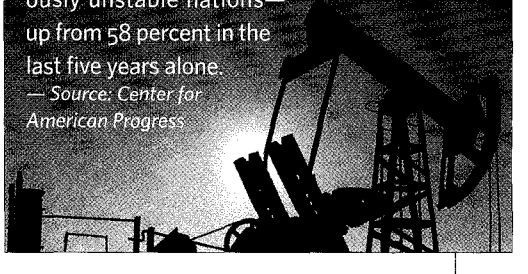
Transforming the electricity sector will require a mix of federal and state policies, because most utilities are state-regulated. Twenty states and the District of Columbia already ask utilities to obtain a certain percentage of their electricity from renewable sources like wind, geothermal, solar, or hydroelectric power. At least 15 states have taxed electricity consumers to fund investment in renewables and energy efficiency, which provides a far greater return on investment than building new power plants. All states need to adopt such standards. The federal government should play a stronger role in easing the permitting process for new renewable energy facilities. It should also make permanent the current temporary tax breaks for renewables. "Business won't invest based on a tax credit that needs to be renewed every two years," says Michael Eckhart, president of the American Council on Renewable Energy. "Globally, the market demand is quite good. The question now is whether we'll have a domestic industry producing it."

The building and industrial sectors also need a boost from government to leapfrog ahead on efficiency. Revamped building codes and appliance standards and the strategic use of tax incentives would create thousands of jobs retrofitting America's industrial and commercial sectors. This could reduce energy usage, increase profitability, and restore the competitiveness of lagging U.S. industries.

Greening the U.S. economy has obvious security and environmental benefits. But it is also a high-growth strategy that can provide millions of well-paid jobs for working-class Americans, who are currently the biggest losers from oil dependency. It will never be achieved without the strong hand of government leading the way. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy vowed to put a man on the moon in less than a decade, and the U.S. government got the job done. Is there any reason to think that this nation couldn't rise to the energy challenge? **TAP**

GREEN FACTS

The United States spends a staggering $200,000 a minute on foreign oil. Some 65 percent of our oil consumption today comes from foreign sources—and many of them, of course, notoriously unstable nations—up from 58 percent in the last five years alone.
—Source: Center for American Progress



Merrill Goozner *is a* Prospect *senior correspondent.*

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The Challenge of Peak Oil

The longer we delay adapting to the inevitable depletion of worldwide oil reserves, the more painful the coming economic transition will be.

BY RICHARD HEINBERG

THE SUPPLY OF EXTRACTABLE OIL is subject to geological limits. At some point those limits will overcome our ability to produce oil at the ever-expanding rates that growing economies demand. The global peak is likely to occur well before societies adapt painlessly to a different energy regime. And that likely time lag contradicts the way orthodox economists imagine that rising prices solve supply shocks by steering economies to develop and use substitutes.

Oil is different from most commodities, because, as President Bush so memorably declared, we are addicted to it, and because substitute energy sources cannot be developed and deployed overnight. And as long as oil remains available and profitable, the existing energy regime also resists the development and substitution of alternatives.

GREEN FACTS

Since 1989, the U.S. transportation sector has used more petroleum than the nation produces. Under current projections, that sector will consume fully twice as much as we produce by the year 2020. — *Source: U.S. Department of Energy*



During the early 20th century, America was the world's foremost producer and exporter of oil. In 1970, the rate of U.S. oil extraction reached its all-time maximum and has generally declined since, even with later discoveries in Alaska and the Gulf of Mexico. Today the United States imports almost two-thirds of the oil it uses.

Altogether, according to ChevronTexaco, out of 48 significant oil-producing nations worldwide, 33 are already experiencing declining production. Few doubt that the rate of oil production for the world in total will peak at some point. That point is known as peak oil. If the peak were to occur within the next five years, national economies could not adjust quickly enough without major dislocations, while a peak 20 years hence would present easier adaptation, assuming we begin adapting now.

Further evidence for a near-term peak includes the fact that global rates of oil discovery have been falling since the early 1960s—a fact confirmed by no less than ExxonMobil. Currently, only about one barrel of oil is being discovered for every five extracted.

On their face, current world petroleum reserves numbers look reassuring. U.S. government agencies estimate proven reserves at more than 1.1 trillion barrels. Some sources claim even more. However, oil optimists include costly and hard-to-extract sources such as Canadian tar sands. And some of the largest producing nations may have inflated their reserves figures for political reasons. An important study released in January concluded that Kuwait's official reserves figures are double the amount that can actually be produced.

Matthew Simmons, founder of Simmons & Company International energy investment bank and author of *Twilight in the Desert: The Coming Saudi Oil Shock and the World Economy*, concludes, from his study of technical papers from the Society of Petroleum Engineers, that Saudi Arabian oil production could be close to its maximum, and that world oil production is also therefore close to peak.

Another important 2005 study, "Peaking of World Oil Production: Impacts, Mitigation and Risk Management," prepared by Science Applications International Corporation for the U.S. Department of Energy, makes clear the risks. The project leader was Robert L. Hirsch, who has had a distinguished career in formulating energy policy. The Executive Summary begins:

> The peaking of world oil production presents the United States and the world with an unprecedented risk management problem. As peaking is approached, liquid fuel prices and price volatility will increase dramatically, and, without timely mitigation, the economic, social, and political costs will be unprecedented. Viable mitigation options exist on both the supply and demand sides, but to have substantial impact, they must be initiated more than a decade in advance of peaking.

The Hirsch report effectively undermines the standard free-market argument that as oil becomes scarcer, higher prices will necessarily stimulate more exploration, development of alternative fuels, and the more efficient use of remaining quantities. The transitional problem is timing.

An obvious example is the failure of today's higher prices to induce more purchases of fuel-efficient cars. Our fleet fuel efficiency for cars is currently quite low, averaging about 22 miles per gallon. Technology exists (including electric/ICE hybrid engines, diesel hybrids, and plug-in hybrids) that could easily achieve between 60 and 100 mpg. But even with a price-spike high enough to induce this shift, auto manufacturers would require at least five years for retooling, and more than double that will be needed for the substantial majority of existing vehicles to be replaced by energy-efficient models.

Thus the response to peak oil will take considerable time and investment capital. Market forces alone will not solve the problem. The solutions will require both the government and the private sector, as well as citizen efforts on a scale not seen since World War II. **TAP**

***Richard Heinberg** is the author of* The Party's Over *and* Powerdown, *and is a Core Faculty member of New College of California in Santa Rosa. This article is adapted from* The Oil Depletion Protocol: A Plan to Avert Oil Wars, Terrorism, and Economic Collapse *(New Society Publishers, June 2006).*

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The Right Chemistry

Green chemistry offers industry a way to reduce regulatory and clean-up costs with the proverbial ounce of prevention.

BY CHRIS MOONEY

When the 2005 Nobel Prize in chemistry was announced last October in Stockholm, the new laureates—Yves Chauvin of the Institute Français du Pétrole, Robert Grubbs of Caltech, and Richard Schrock of MIT—won recognition for creating "fantastic opportunities for producing new molecules." They had explained and developed a reaction known as metathesis, which allows chemists to selectively design organic molecules by trading atoms across different compounds. In search of an analogy to help the pubic grasp this concept, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences likened the process to changing partners in a dance. Then came the political statement: The advance represented a "great step forward for green chemistry," the academy declared. It allowed chemists to slash the number of steps needed to produce a desired molecule, as well as to reduce the number of unwanted and often dangerous byproducts.

The Nobel Prize citation marks the official arrival of green chemistry. A concept that grew out of a unique collaboration between a scientist in private industry and one working for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, it's now making major waves in the world of science. The journal *Green Chemistry*, founded only in 1999, has seen its "impact factor," a measure of how widely a journal is cited, skyrocket. And perhaps even more significantly, the precepts of green chemistry are being adopted by businesses seeking to better serve the bottom line. At a time of considerable pessimism about corporate America's penchant for attacking scientific information pointing to health risks arising from its products, green chemistry presents a happier and more positive tale—suggesting that economic growth and environmental and health protections aren't necessarily incompatible after all.

The concept of green chemistry—in essence, building environmental and public health concerns into the chemical design process at the outset, rather than waiting until after a substance is produced and unleashed to determine whether it's hazardous—dates back to the early 1990s. A key intellectual reaction occurred when John Warner, a chemist with Polaroid, met with EPA official Paul Anastas (who happened to be an old friend) to discuss a new innovation that, for once, had government regulators excited rather than worried. Warner had come up with a simpler and less toxic process, based on the use of tiny crystals, to help prevent Polaroid's instant film from deteriorating on the store shelf. Anastas recognized that Warner and Polaroid had accomplished all of the EPA's pollution prevention objectives through chemical design and scientific innovation, rather than through after-the-fact regulatory action.

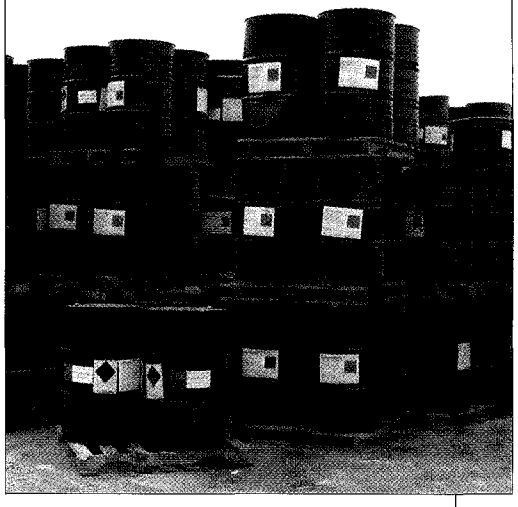
In 1991, the EPA launched its Green Chemistry Program. By 1996, the agency had created the annual Presidential Green Chemistry Challenge Award, honoring companies and scientific innovators helping to prevent pollution before government regulators have to step in. In 1998, Anastas and Warner teamed up to write the influential book *Green Chemistry: Theory and Practice*, which articulated the 12 principles of their approach, including prevention ("it is better to prevent waste than to treat or clean up waste after it has been created"), safer solvents and auxiliaries ("the use of auxiliary substances [e.g., solvents, separation agents, etc.] should be made unnecessary wherever possible and innocuous when used"), and design for degradation ("chemical products should be designed so that at the end of their function they break down into innocuous degradation products and do not persist in the environment"). For the first time, the science itself made such revolutionary ounce-of-prevention ideas possible.

Warner and Anastas have continued to evangelize about their ideas and have seen them take root at major institutions. Warner founded the first green chemistry Ph.D. program at the University of Massachusetts-Boston (later duplicated when he moved to University of Massachusetts-Lowell). Students learn about building molecules but also about toxicology and what makes certain substances hazardous. Rather amazingly, traditional chemistry education does not include such instruction even though, as Warner points out, to get his chemistry Ph.D. he did have to learn how to translate a scientific paper into a foreign language. Anastas, meanwhile, now heads up the Green Chemistry Institute, founded in 1997, at the hallowed American Chemical Society.

GREEN FACTS

Eighteen percent of the petroleum we consume in America today is used to make petrochemicals, and their manufacture and disposal generates serious toxic emissions. Organic biomass—simple plant materials—could substitute for much or all of these petroleum-derived materials.

— Source: Institute for Local Self-Reliance



The advantages of green chemistry become immediately apparent when you apply its principles to some of the classic case studies of good

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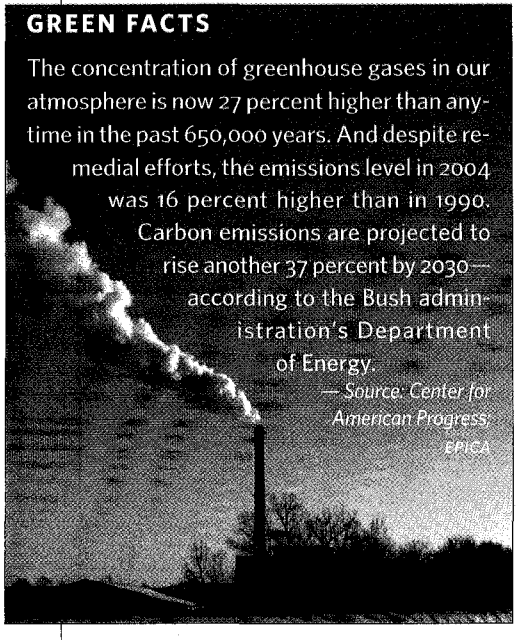
chemicals gone bad—like, for example, chlorofluorcarbons (CFCs). These chemicals were designed for a reason: Previous refrigerants had been toxic. By contrast, CFCs weren't flammable or otherwise hazardous—at least to humans. Their popularity quickly spread, and they became widely used in refrigerators, air conditioners, and as propellants in various sprays. It wasn't until the mid-1970s that scientists first realized, almost by accident, that the long-lived chemicals were making their way up into the stratosphere and releasing chlorine atoms that, in turn, set off chain reactions that were destroying the earth's protective ozone layer.

How would a green chemist approach substances like CFCs? Not make them, to put it simply. From the very start, explains Anastas, the green chemist would think about properties of a molecule like persistence or durability (how long-lived or indestructible it is). Indeed, the "design for degradation" principle of green chemistry explicitly addresses this topic. So if a chemical—like CFC—doesn't degrade easily, that's a warning signal that it might have an unexpected effect when released into the world. "By addressing the problems at the design phase, you have a much greater chance of avoiding these surprises," Anastas explains.

GREEN FACTS

The concentration of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere is now 27 percent higher than anytime in the past 650,000 years. And despite remedial efforts, the emissions level in 2004 was 16 percent higher than in 1990. Carbon emissions are projected to rise another 37 percent by 2030—according to the Bush administration's Department of Energy.

—Source: Center for American Progress



These days—when many major companies have a CFC-type story in their past—that's a message that businessmen can appreciate. Companies spend a fortune dealing with the government's regulatory process—installing scrubbers in power plants, engaging in toxic clean ups, defending themselves in court, paying damages. On top of that, they often spend money on public relations to burnish—or rehabilitate—their images. Sometimes they even dole out for scientific expertise or "product defense," so that if their products are accused of causing health risks they can fight back with a tobacco company–style strategy of doubt and denial.

The sheer allure of the science will help spread green chemistry. But so will the economic advantages to business and, increasingly, demands from consumers.

Yet if companies could fully implement green chemistry—and actually cease causing real or potential harms in the first place—all of these costs might be cut.

No wonder, then, that green chemistry is "definitely penetrating into the market," according to Andrea Larson, a professor at the Darden School of Business Administration at the University of Virginia who's writing a book about the economic benefits reaped by companies that pursue sustainable business practices. To be sure, Larson emphasizes, not all firms involved in green chemistry have made it a major strategic focus. That's in part because, in the words of Warner, green chemistry's "toolbox" is still 95 percent empty, meaning that it cannot yet provide solutions for most chemical problems.

Nevertheless, considerable awareness of green chemistry exists, including among major companies like Pfizer and DuPont. Even mega-corporations like GE and Wal-Mart have at least made general nods recently toward more environmentally friendly business practices. "If you're thinking long term, and positioning your company, then you'd better be on top of this stuff, or you're going to be left behind," says Larson.

In many cases smaller companies have been the greatest innovators. Take AgraQuest, a 2003 winner of the presidential green chemistry award based in Davis, California. The company has pioneered environmentally friendly and biologically based pest control products like Serenade, a biofungicide that protects crops without leaving any chemical residue or harming beneficial organisms like bees and wasps. NatureWorks, another presidential award winner, is actually owned by agriculture giant Cargill Dow. It's making water bottles and packaging substances out of corn, rather than using more traditional petroleum-based processes for creating plastics.

Environmentalists have been rightly concerned about companies engaging in "greenwashing"—selling themselves as environmentally friendly to enhance public relations, without actually walking the walk. But these examples—and they're only a small sampling—demonstrate that green chemistry has gone far beyond mere show at this point, earning serious scientific and economic recognition. Now the quest begins to fill the other 95 percent of the toolbox.

"It's a really exciting time to be a chemist," says Anastas.

The allure of the science should help further accelerate the spread of green chemistry; so should the obvious economic benefits and competitive advantages for companies. And there's another factor as well. Increasingly, customers and investors are demanding that the companies in which they place their trust reflect their own values when it comes to protecting public health and the environment. Today, companies are increasingly realizing that if they don't go green on their own, the market may do it for them. **TAP**

Chris Mooney *is a* Prospect *senior correspondent and author of the recent book* The Republican War on Science.

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Business, as Usual?

Ethanol could be a huge boost to small farmers and the rural economy. But unless we are vigilant, the big winners could be the usual suspects.

BY CHRISTOPHER D. COOK

When President Bush suddenly embraced wood chips and biofuels on national television, renewable energy producers received a prime-time injection of hope. Ethanol backers forecast a boon for farmers and the environment. Yet serious questions remain about whether ethanol merely enables our addiction to an unsustainable auto-centered society—unless it's part of a broader shift in consumption and production.

Equally critical is the matter of what a carbohydrate economy means for America's two million farmers (by no means a monolithic lot), and for the future of sustainable agriculture. Will biofuels benefit smaller growers, or just large-scale producers and agribusiness? How will pressures for increased production and reduced energy prices effect farmers? Would small and mid-sized growers fare any better in the energy economy than they have in a rapidly consolidating food economy that has driven so many off the land and into poverty?

The stakes are significant: Protecting smaller-scale, diversified farms is intrinsic to ecological stewardship and rural economic health, sustainable farming advocates (and some biofuels proponents) argue. A major biofuels expansion could spur yet more large-scale industrial agriculture, which often relies heavily on petroleum-based fertilizers and pesticides and deploys fuel-guzzling farm machinery. Pressures for large-volume production and cheap energy might ultimately harm smaller farmers and the environment—unless there are explicit policies to protect both.

The exploding ethanol market has brought U.S. corn growers—and agribusiness firms like Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) and Cargill—a harvest of fresh cash: a crop of 1.25 billion bushels in 2004 (projected to be 1.6 billion by the end of this year), worth more than $3 billion, according to a study prepared for the Renewable Fuels Association. Ethanol's direct and spin-off effects, the trade group says, include an estimated 147,206 jobs created, $14 billion added to the U.S. gross domestic product, and a trade benefit from reducing oil imports by 143 million barrels. Ninety-five plants across the country, 46 of them farmer-owned, now produce 4 billion gallons a year (1 billion gallons of it by ADM alone) of ethanol. Another 31 plants are under construction.

A growing portion of America's corn harvest—roughly 18 percent, up from just 8 percent in 2000, according to USDA data—is now funneled to fuel production. With corn prices consistently below the cost of production and fuel prices marching upward, ethanol has provided flexibility to some growers, particularly those in farmer-owned cooperatives. "Even at the small farm level you can see real opportunities to improve the farm economy by creating new markets and new ownerships," says Patrick Mazza, research director for Climate Solutions, a renewable-energy group based in Washington state. "What's nice for the ethanol farmers in those co-ops is that when corn prices are high they can make money on corn and when corn prices are low they can make money on ethanol."

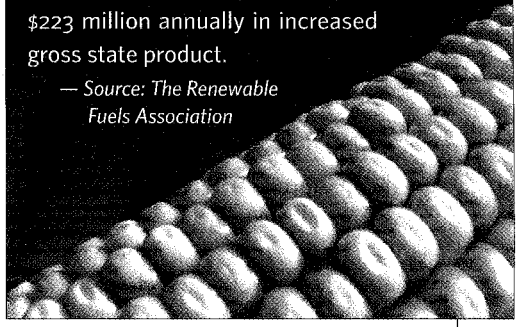
The epicenter of farmer success so far is Minnesota, where clean-fuel standards and producer incentives have spurred an ethanol boom led by 12 farmer co-ops. In Minnesota's southwestern corner, the small city of Luverne is home to the farmer-owned Cornerstone Co-op, which churns out more than 20 million gallons of corn ethanol annually. Launched in 1998, the cooperative has attracted 220 area farmers who must pony up an initial investment of at least $10,000 and deliver 5,000 or more bushels of corn each year. According to manager David Kolsrud, the plant produces a healthy return of 30-plus cents per gallon, and "through the first eight years of operation [farmers] have gotten back over five times their original investment ... From a rural development standpoint we feel very strongly that community-based plants with farmer ownership have a more significant value to the area than having outside ownership."

But as ethanol undergoes an inevitable process of industrialization, and capital requirements intensify, small and medium-sized farmers could be squeezed out unless policies are explicitly designed to promote them. Kolsrud warily observes that "the industry trend is toward larger facilities which are either owned by farmers, or, as in many cases, are owned by Wall Street investors and other bigger entities getting into the business." Kolsrud remains optimistic that small co-ops can survive—"for a while"—by selling ethanol through larger marketing alliances, but the long-term picture for farmers is unclear.

GREEN FACTS

The average 100-million gallon ethanol facility creates nearly 1,600 jobs and generates $223 million annually in increased gross state product.

— Source: The Renewable Fuels Association



This corporate presence is nothing new, says John Crabtree, analyst for the Center for Rural Affairs, a Nebraska-based farm advocacy group. "People need to understand that ethanol production is already an incredibly concentrated market. Archer Daniels Midland and Cargill control the lion's share of ethanol production."

Ethanol leader ADM's market share has actually declined from a stunningly high 60 percent to a still-worrisome 25 to 30 percent in recent years. But a recent analysis by USDA agricultural economists con-

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cluded, "The fuel ethanol industry may very well be in transition toward an inevitable concentration of ownership into the hands of a few large processing firms." The market is driven by large-scale gasoline refining firms, which "don't want to deal with all these small plants," and a "virtual consolidation of ethanol processing" is taking place. (ADM didn't respond to multiple requests for comment for this story.)

New biorefinery developments are trending away from farmer ownership. In 1999, farmers owned all new plants being constructed, but by 2006 "they owned just 19% of the 1.7 billion gallons that will flow from 29 new plants going up or expanding," according to *Successful Farming* magazine.

GREEN FACTS

When burned, biodiesel emits 48 percent less carbon monoxide, 80 percent less aromatic hydrocarbons—which contribute to both smog and ozone—and 100 percent less sulfates than conventional petroleum diesel.

—*Source: The National Biodiesel Board*

"You have some of the same players as in the food sector, Cargill and ADM, whose interest is in buying low and selling high," points out George Boody, executive director of the Minnesota-based Land Stewardship Project, who wants to ensure that biofuels are grown sustainably. "Massive production of a few crops is the best way to get there, and that typically doesn't bode well for small to mid-sized farmers because the margins get too tight and the acreage requirements grow and grow."

Farming expert and author Marty Strange, a onetime director of the Center for Rural Affairs, says ethanol's growth, like the rest of agricultural industrialization, brings little hope for smaller producers. "There's no question that large-scale ethanol production depends on large-scale grain production. The small-scale diversified grain farmer is not what the ethanol industry relies on."

Another dilemma: By edging out diversified farming, large-scale corn monocropping could weaken local food security, requiring more long-distance transport of foods (already averaging roughly 1,800 miles per item)—thus more diesel pollution from the trucks that haul foodstuffs. Meanwhile, EPA efforts to repair the Gulf of Mexico's 10,000-square-mile hypoxic zone, a massive oxygen-killing algae bloom created in good part by runoff from fertilizers and pesticides applied to corn and other grain crops, may call for *less* corn—not more. Likewise, some advocates emphasize the need for more localized ethanol (and biodiesel) production, to support farmers and avoid the ironies of cross-country shipping of renewable fuels.

THESE ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL tensions are generating increased collaboration between sustainable farming and clean-energy advocates. Jim Kleinschmit, rural communities program director for the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, cites a growing concern that biofuels "be produced in a way that's sustainable for the landscape, for the farmer's pocketbook, and for the community." Patrick Mazza and others say that ethanol and other biomass energy can be produced in a way that sustains farmers and the environment, if policy incentives are designed to promote both.

An array of ideas are afloat to encourage a more sustainable biofuels expansion: a diversified renewable energy policy that, rather than expanding corn crops, promotes more wind power and cellulosic energy from switchgrass and crop residues (which may favor localized, small-scale production); a federal version of Minnesota's model, creating targeted incentives for farmer co-ops; and increased research spending by the USDA and Department of Energy to develop smaller-scale biofuels processing plants. Negotiations for the 2007 federal farm bill, already simmering, will feature a battle between agribusiness' push for monocropping of cheap commodities, and family farm groups' efforts to raise crop prices and rein in corporate control.

Iowa corn and soybean farmer George Naylor, president of the National Family Farm Coalition, warns that without proper supports, intense pressures for cheap energy will further imperil farmers' frayed pocketbooks. "It's an absolute must that there be public policy to make sure that the environment is taken into account, how land is being used, and whether family farmers benefit at all from it." Such policy, says Naylor, must incorporate the intertwined concerns of small farmers, sustainable agriculture, and clean energy—"so it isn't just a matter of everyone going out and plowing the hell out of the countryside thinking there's going to be a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow." **TAP**

***Christopher D. Cook**'s writings have appeared in* Harper's, The Economist, *the* Christian Science Monitor *and elsewhere. He is the author of* Diet for a Dead Planet: Big Business and the Coming Food Crisis *(New Press).*

European Shades of Green

In addition to our trade imbalance, America has a huge deficit of smart environmental policies. Here's where more imports makes sense.

BY EZRA KLEIN

"OH, AND ONE MORE THING," SAID Sebastian Paauw, organizer of a recent trip I took to the Netherlands, "we're not going to rent you a car, but we'll give you a bike."

True to his word, he promptly provided me with a bicycle. And while the cheese, wine, and charmingly narrow streets and alleyways made me feel pretty European, my new, cosmopolitan identity didn't quite click till I was gliding about on my sloping, bright-red three-speed.

But I'm a Californian, and a southern Californian at that. So I'm plenty used to lands where automobile intertwines with identity. When the British architec-

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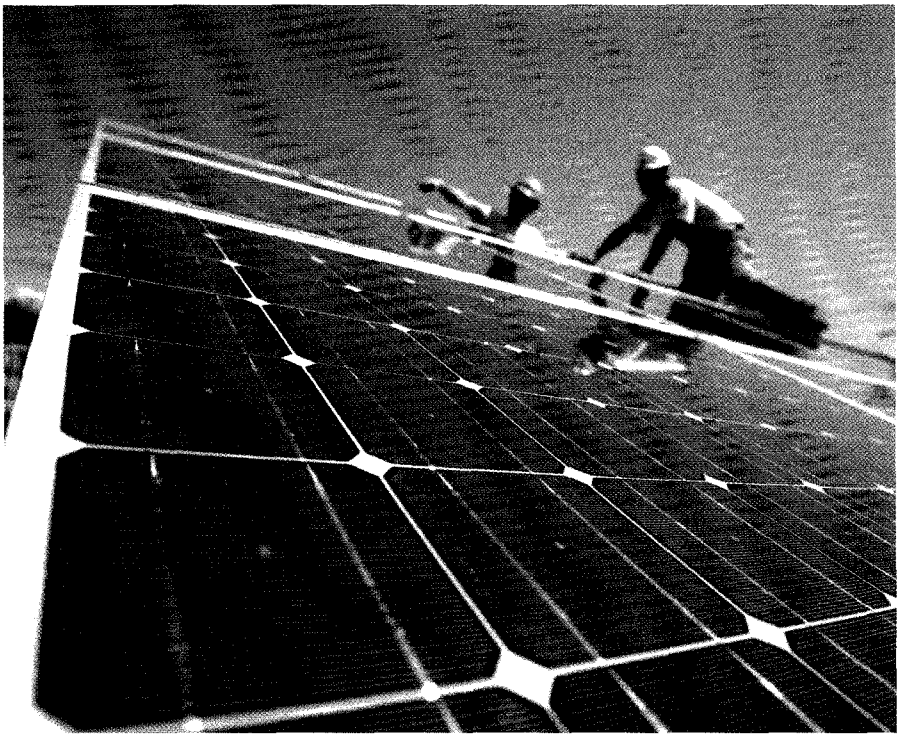
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tural critic Reyner Banham decided to interpret Los Angeles, he learned to drive, judging it impossible to understand the city without a stick shift. Attempting to experience Europe from within a Hummer would be like Banham exploring LA as a pedestrian: it wouldn't work, and would earn scorn from the natives to boot.

That's largely because, for a variety of reasons, Europe has long been more serious about its environmentalism than the United States. Much belligerent unilateralism has been ascribed to George W. Bush's rejection of the Kyoto climate change protocols, but less discussed is the impetus for Europe's wholehearted embrace. It springs, at least in part, from the knowledge that global warming will devastate that continent first and worst. Scientists predict that by 2080, Europe will no longer have *winters*, their storied, stately alpines will melt, and over in the Netherlands, Sebastian Paauw's kids won't be handing out any more bikes; they'll be too busy offering scuba gear to adventurous explorers eager to dive through the remains of a charming European country that went the way of Atlantis.

But Europe has no intention of going gently into that good—if ahistorically warm—night. According to German environmental minister Jürgen Tritten, his countrymen have made a tradition of screening the 1958 Oscar-winning Western *The Big Country* during holidays. The film stars Gregory Peck, playing a retired ship captain who moves west to marry his sweetheart and ends up accidentally embroiled in a conflict over water rights. Not to give it away, but Peck, playing the anti-cowboy, ends up wresting control of the river from rival ranchers and demanding that the locals respect the resource and cease ravaging the commons. If only it were so easy in real life, Tritten seemed to imply. Sadly, it turns out that it's much easier to mediate in a big country, or even a big continent, than a whole world.

America, the world's largest producer of carbon gases, has evinced nothing but hostility to curbing emissions, and with no nation-state version of Gregory Peck on the horizon to demand temperance, the Europeans have had to lead by example. And so they have.



Here Comes the Sun: Switzerland's largest photovoltaic power station, at the Verbois Dam

PHILIPPON JOEL/MAXPPP/LANDOV

Tritten's Germany, for one, has sprinted into the lead on climate change, implementing an array of programs to increase the usage of renewable energy resources. Currently, use of solar, wind, geothermal and tidal power and biomass cuts CO_2 production by 50 million tons. The German government has mandated that, by 2020, these and other alternative sources of energy make up 20 percent of the country's electricity needs and, by 2050, 50 percent of total energy consumption. These ambitious goals have opened up new markets for German corporations. Estimates have photovoltaic (solar) cells comprising a $100 billion market by 2020. Japan has long led this field, with the United States in second place. No longer. Germany has firmly supplanted us, boasting 140 installed megawatts versus our mere 70. And that understates American slippage in the market. California, land of sunshine, plays host to the world's largest solar plant, which the German Environment Ministry financed to the tune of six million euros. Based on the experience accrued during that project, it will be a German company, Solar Millenium, that will construct the first commercial power plant to produce "parabolic-trough" solar energy, which uses sophisticated mirror systems that concentrate the sun's radiation, in Granada, Spain. But hey—who wants to be on the cutting edge of tomorrow's technologies?

OH, RIGHT, ICELAND. BECAUSE OVER there, they're tired of their best known export being Björk and have resolved to attain an early lead on hydrogen technologies and, for that matter, make their entire country oil free by 2050. To be fair, Iceland is in a unique energy situation, sitting as it does atop a limitless amount of geothermal power provided by a hyperconcentration of volcanoes that boil the country's underground springs and baths, generating heat that can then be harnessed for electricity.

That natural advantage, however, has spurred the island nation to reconceptualize its economy as the perfect testing ground for hydrogen, a clean, efficient, and renewable source of energy. And with the highest per capita car ownership rate in the world—and no domestic fuel industry to offer competition—Icelanders have adopted the project wholeheartedly. Their bus fleet already runs

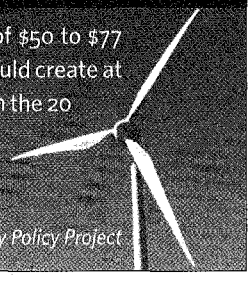
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on the stuff; the buses emit a ghostly trail of water vapors that, during cold weather, occasionally scares visitors into thinking the buses are burning. When the fuel tank depletes, the buses drive into the world's first commercial hydrogen station, developed with Shell and officially opened in April 2003. Along for the ride have been all manner of multinationals, from interested organizations like the European Union to desirous multinationals like DaimlerChrysler.

GREEN FACTS

A national investment of $50 to $77 billion in wind energy could create at least 120,000 new jobs in the 20 states that have lost the most manufacturing jobs since 2001.

— Source: Renewable Energy Policy Project



But while Iceland works to routinize the hydrogen economy and eventually render it economically competitive enough for export, the rest of Europe is taking a decidedly less dramatic approach to curbing carbon emissions. Wind power has, ahem, swept the continent, particularly Denmark, where travelers arriving by boat float past 20 massive turbines, calmly spinning their 100-foot blades about two miles off the coast while powering 32,000 homes on the mainland. Like solar power, wind power is another industry Americans seemed poised to dominate. Indeed, the Danish producers cut their teeth on an order for 10,000 turbines from California in the early 1980s. But the tax credits and government subsidies driving the Californian expansion lapsed, and so did the Golden State's interest.

The Danes, meanwhile, parlayed their turbine production into the country's largest export industry, dominating the rapidly expanding market for wind-power technologies. Wind power accounts for nearly 13 percent of Denmark's current energy usage, and is expected to account for fully 50 percent by 2030. Denmark is particularly well-suited to wind, and its success is only partially replicable across the European Union and the world. So what of all the other European countries not gusted by or placed on top of limitless energy sources?

On January 1, 2005, the European Union's carbon trading program went live. Power plants and farms that account for about half the EU's CO_2 emissions and that are scattered across the continent have been given carbon emission allowances—limits that they must meet. If they're able to institute efficiencies and come in under their caps, they can sell the remaining credits to organizations and industries having more trouble living within their CO_2 means. Currently, energy use that exceeds 20 megawatts an hour triggers automatic enrollment in the system, and the carbon caps, negotiated by home governments, are fairly relaxed. Both ends are expected to tighten as the system ramps up and comes in for review and revision in 2008. Early signs, however, are promising. The BBC reports that by November 2005, over 200 million metric tons of carbon had been traded.

And for Europe, that may be the future: taking the individual commitments of its leading member-states and forcing them on the developing economies eager to enter the European Union's embrace. In May of 2004, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia all joined the European Union. One precondition for their entry: to accept the *acquis communautaire*, the body of ratified EU laws. Among these laws are a score of relatively strict environmental protection standards covering everything from climate change to waste management. This has triggered an investment boom of sorts. For Poland alone, complying with the wastewater and management regulations will cost 60 billion euros.

And so, interestingly, the European Union itself has assumed Gregory Peck's Hollywood role, at least in Europe. But roping in a bunch of small-time ranches while an agribusiness conglomerate digs in upstream is of questionable value. In the end, Europe can lead its horses to water and teach them how to drink moderately. When it comes to the challenge of global climate change, however, that's of limited utility unless they can make America do it, too. **TAP**

A Win-Win Bargain

American and Third World farmers are at odds over farm subsidies. Trade rules that promote energy crops could serve everyone.

BY GAYLE SMITH

As presently structured, the global trading system frequently pits the working poor in the developed and developing worlds against one another. The subsidies that help sustain the livelihoods of American farmers have a direct, adverse effect on the ability of farmers in the world's poorest countries to compete on the global market.

The conventional wisdom holds that the phaseout of subsidies paid to American farmers will automatically lead to a fair market price for poor farmers in the developing world. But farm commodity prices are notoriously volatile, and there is a better way to achieve a win-win solution: By reducing export subsidies and increasing investment in the production of energy crops, the United States can lay the groundwork for a grand bargain that would allow American farmers to increase domestic income while expanding the market in other agricultural goods for farmers from poor countries.

Even with the expansion of global trade, 54 countries are poorer today than they were 15 years ago. Poverty levels in Africa have increased by 43 percent over the last decade, and almost half of the world's people live on less than $2 per day.

It is both ironic and tragic that changes to U.S. trade policy that favor the developing world are often opposed by farm interests on the grounds that they

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hurt U.S. producers. The irony is that by promoting development through increasing trade and better terms of trade, the United States can help to increase the purchasing power of the world's poor, and thus pave the way for increased market demand for American goods and services in the future. The tragedy is that this argument pits producers at home and abroad against one another, when in fact they aspire to the same goals—and face some of the same challenges.

Farmers are famously vulnerable to prices beyond their control while their costs are fixed. Like farmers everywhere, American producers need dynamic public policies to increase and secure the prosperity of their operations. Unfortunately, U.S. farm subsidies, with their production-related incentives, generate often perverse market conditions for U.S. farmers. Even though the United States Department of Agriculture forecasts near record-level production of corn and soybeans in 2005, the glut of commodities on the market caused by payment incentives is depressing prices below domestic operating costs. As a result, farm subsidies paid out in 2005 will increase more than 60 percent from 2004, and will likely exceed the 2000 record of $22.9 billion.

However, just 10 percent of commodity farmers collect more than 70 percent of the payments. Record subsidy payments will do nothing for the 60 percent of farming households that lose money on their agricultural operations and must rely on off-farm income for survival. Without crop diversification and the reduction of production-related subsidies, American farmers will continue to suffer from the economic downturns created, in part, by the United States' own policies.

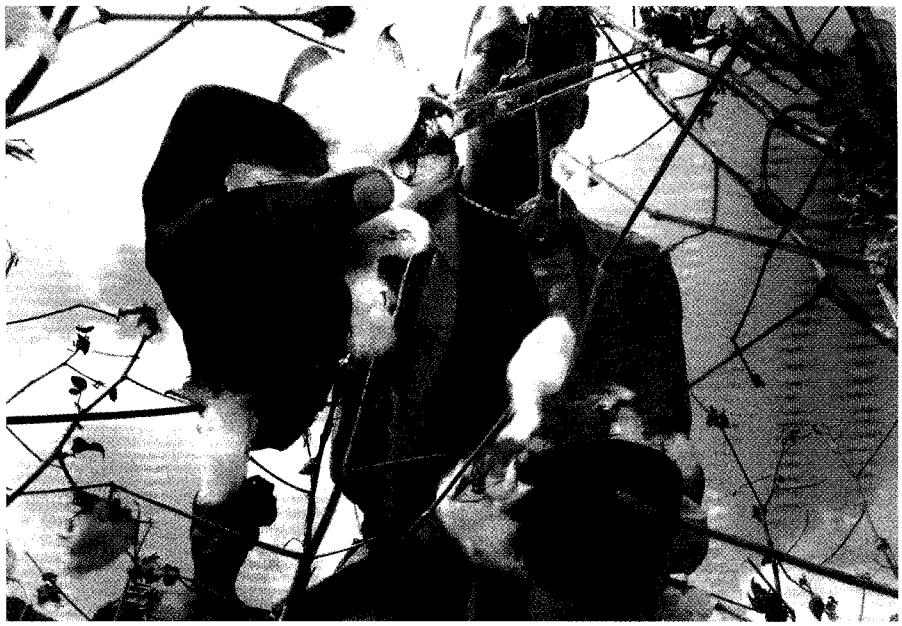
By investing in biofuels derived from plants and agricultural waste, the United States can develop a cleaner, more sustainable alternative to oil and revive a flagging domestic agricultural sector. At the community level, farmers that produce dedicated energy crops can grow both their own incomes and their own supply of affordable energy. At the national level, the production of biofuels will generate new industries, new technologies, and new markets, all while reducing energy expenditures and paving the way for developing countries to put their resources into real, meaningful development.

How to achieve this bargain? One way is to take a new tack on trade.

The latest in a string of trade negotiations, the Doha Round of trade talks was launched with a commitment by the world's richest nations to make development a centerpiece of trade and reform the trading system to enable poorer countries to make real gains, particularly in areas of relative competitive strength, like agriculture, which sustains 70 percent of the rural poor in developing countries. But the Doha Round is stalled, as both sides are dug in. The United States and Europe refuse to cut agricultural subsidies until poor nations further open markets to manufacturing exports.

A World Bank study recently noted that the sheer size of agricultural subsidies relative to the size of the market has the effect of rewarding noncompetitive producers and wreaking havoc on small economies that are heavily dependent on the export of only a few crops. For example, the combined value of U.S. and European Union cotton subsidies is $4.4 billion—in a global cotton market valued at $20 billion.

In West Africa, cotton was introduced at the dawn of independence in the 1960s and initially paved the way to relative wealth, fetching such a high price on the world market that it came to be known as "white gold." Entire economies were turned over to cotton production, and today cotton is the primary source of national income for countries like Benin, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Chad. Yet, this same white gold today drives economic decline. Over time, the heavily subsidized cotton sector in the United States has displaced the smaller and more fragile economies of West Africa by triggering overproduction and, with it, a dramatic fall in the international price of cotton. West African cotton producers earn an average of just $400 per year.



"White Gold": Cotton, once a boon to West African economies, has recently driven decline.

Taken alone, a reduction in export subsidies by the developed world is insufficient to ensure that the world's poorest citizens see real and sustainable benefits from globalization. Yet by combining subsidy reduction with investments in alternative energy at home and abroad, the United States can make a shift in subsidy policy more politically acceptable and lead the way to a more equitable global future.

Although the we have only four percent of the world's population, we account for a quarter of global petroleum demand, making the United States the most profligate oil consumer on the planet. Our

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oil dependence is draining the federal budget, corrupting the global environment, contributing to high energy prices, and skewing our foreign policy.

The developing world's dependence on oil, meanwhile, fuels rampant poverty. The doubling of the price of oil over the last two years has had a disproportionate impact on the world's poorest countries, 38 of which are net importers and 25 of which import all of their oil. Three-quarters of the countries considered to be performing well enough economically to qualify for international debt relief, meanwhile, are net oil importers; some allocate as much as 5 percent of their gross domestic product to cover oil imports.

GREEN FACTS

Apart from 2004, in every year since 1998, between a quarter and a half of all net farm income in the United States has come from government payments. Not since the 1980s has the average American farmer been so dependent on Washington for so much of his income.

— Source: Agricultural Policy Analysis Center, University of Tennessee



But it is the developing world that is leading the way to a new, renewable energy future, with Brazil, a rising agricultural superpower, in the lead. Over the past 30 years, Brazil has turned its rich supply of sugarcane into ethanol, thereby creating both fuel and jobs. Today, the majority of Brazilian drivers fill up with a gasoline blend that is 25 percent ethanol, while a growing number of cars on the road run on pure ethanol. The economic impact has been substantial: Between 1975 and 2000, Brazil's ethanol use saved the country $43.5 billion worth of oil imports and created one million new jobs for its citizens.

Last year, the Rocky Mountain Institute and the Natural Resources Defense Council released studies that demonstrated how biofuels, coupled with strong efficiency and smart-growth policies, could dramatically reduce, if not eliminate, the United States' need for oil. By dramatically increasing investment in the research, development, and deployment components of a large-scale agriculture-based energy sector, and by providing the incentives and risk-management tools that can support the transition to new crops, the U.S. government and private sector could, as Brazil has done, transform our energy landscape and the lives of America's small farmers. And by developing a new competitive edge and creating new domestic markets for American farmers, we could free up other commodity markets to the developing world and help to ensure that the world's poorest farmers can fairly compete.

Ensuring that the 2007 federal farm bill includes robust provisions for domestic energy production, capitalized in part by reductions in export subsidies, will aid farmers at home and abroad. But more is needed to extend the promise of renewable energy—and with it, the escape from poverty—to the world's poorest farmers.

First, we must rapidly scale up our investments in research and development, and fully fund and disseminate these advances in technology throughout the developing world. Second, we can target our development aid. The United States, along with other members of the G8, provides debt relief to countries that meet a designated set of performance standards. The savings are then invested in critical social sectors, including health and education. If we allowed the savings to also be invested in the development and deployment of biofuels, those countries would be able to ensure increased incomes for their agricultural producers and reduce their cost of oil imports.

Like any country, the United States can and should pursue its own economic interests in defining the terms of world trade. But our own prosperity, security, and moral credibility depend on a world united behind common principles and a global order that affords a majority of the world's people the right to live in dignity, earn a living wage, and offer better lives to their children.

Here is an opportunity to truly think globally and act locally. By investing in the potential of our own domestic agricultural sector to produce alternative energy, the United States can create new markets, increase farm income, and offer rural America something better than just a safety net: a competitive edge. In so doing, the United States can take the first step in a strategy designed to offer farmers in the developing world something better: the chance to compete in a fair market. **TAP**

***Gayle Smith** is a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress. Previously, she was a special assistant to President Clinton, and held senior posts at the National Security Council and the U.S. Agency for International Development, and in 2005 directed the Global Poverty track of Clinton's Global Initiative. Smith was based in Africa for almost 20 years as a journalist.*

A Renewable Economy as a Global Ethic

It's a win-win equation for the planet—and one that will advance the goals of sustainable agriculture, clean energy, and human health.

BY MICHAEL LERNER

IN A SONG DEDICATED TO MARTIN Luther King Jr., James Taylor sings:

We are bound together
By our desire to see the world become
A place where our children can grow up free and strong.

For more than three decades, the world movement for sustainable development has been driven by that aspiration. The vision of a plant-based economy is a new way of offering a more concrete vision of sustainable development to cre-

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ate a world safe for children and all life.

For many groups that now work separately, the vision of a plant-based green economy also provides opportunities to work together. In the United States, nonprofit networks operate principally in separate silos on green economy issues such as environmental health, climate change, sustainable agriculture, sustainable consumption, forest preservation, smart growth, environmental justice, and the like. Each of these networks is, in itself, far too small to drive transformative economic change. The green economy, by contrast, is a comprehensive social agenda that can achieve many of the goals of all of these diverse groups.

The green economy can attract allies in the government and for-profit sectors. It makes deep sense from a geopolitical and strategic perspective for the United States to take this decisive step toward energy independence. The green economy makes political sense in many "red" as well as "blue" states, and suggests a new bipartisanship. It is in the interest of the farm states to grow our energy, fuel, and materials feedstocks.

A bio-based economy is the only scalable alternative to a global economy addicted to oil and petrochemicals. At current rates of growth, China and India alone will outstrip the entire global demand for oil and other key raw materials within 30 years.

In the United States, with vast acreage available to plant crops, a bio-based economy, in which we "grow" green energy, green materials, and green chemistry feedstocks, is also the best hope for a new industrial production base for good jobs. Bio-based production represents the marriage of the goals of sustainable agriculture, green energy, and the broader environmental health movement.

One central question is: who will own and control this technological revolution? The petrochemical industry has controlled the heights of the global economy and global geopolitical strategies for the last century. This has led to global climate destabilization, the poisoning of the entire web of life with toxic chemicals, and a foreign policy that requires sustained hostilities in the Middle East and support for undemocratic regimes wherever there are remaining gas and oil reserves.

The bio-based economy can and should be based on larger democratic and "open source" values and strategies. Opportunities exist for local and regional interests to take substantial ownership of these new technologies, to help promote an economy that supports health, environment, and community interests.

Above all, the green economy is self-evidently linked to a sustainable world that will support human health. Human health is fundamentally dependent on a stable climate and crops that can be grown in a stable climate. Human health is equally dependent on the reversal of a century of buildup of toxic chemicals in the body of all life. In humans, more than 100 diseases, disorders, and conditions are linked in leading toxicology texts to manmade chemical contaminants. The revolution in environmental health sciences described by Pete Myers [see "Good Genes Gone Bad," page A13] is generating a large body of evidence that many of the epidemic conditions of our time are related to these contaminants.

Clean air, clean water, and safe foods are historically issues that have animated voters. Now voters show a growing concern about visible evidence of climate change and of the pervasive, pernicious impact of chemicals on health.

Patient and health professional groups concerned with cancer, birth defects, asthma, heart disease, learning and developmental disabilities, infertility and pregnancy, Parkinson's disease, and endometriosis have already begun to engage to fight for a healthy environment and a phaseout of toxic chemicals. As the concerns of these health groups converge, a set of issues that were once considered "environmental" are being reframed as fundamental to the health and safety of families. This is a profound transformation.

A parallel development is the growing involvement of faith communities. Faith groups have become critical leaders in the struggle for climate-friendly energy policies. Increasingly, these same faith groups are engaging the issue of toxic chemicals. Just as patients' groups bring human health to the table, faith groups bring an indispensable moral voice to the dialogue.

The specifics of how we frame the green economy debate, and the strategies and tactics we pursue, deserve careful attention. The goal would be to substantively unite the key health, environment, faith, labor, justice, and nongovernmental organization communities who share these concerns, in conjunction with the many enlightened corporate interests who embrace a green economic future.

A bio-based economy is the only alternative to our oil addiction: China and India will outstrip the entire global demand for oil and other raw materials within 30 years.

The environmental health movement, which over the past decade has brought together a formidable range of interests concerned with chemicals and health, is a good example of the extent to which such alliances are achievable when a constructive new frame, such as environmental health, is widely adopted.

The green economy is not the ultimate frame, since there are important issues it does not address. But it is a practical and achievable next step that could bring together progressives and conservatives in an alliance to build a healthy and sustainable world. **TAP**

Michael Lerner *is president of Commonweal, a health and environmental research institute in Bolinas, California.* *He acknowledges the contributions of Gary Cohen and Pete Myers to this article.*

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Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*

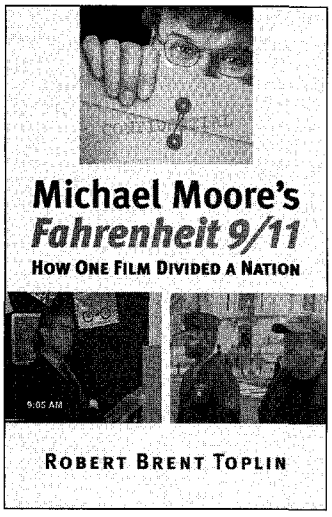
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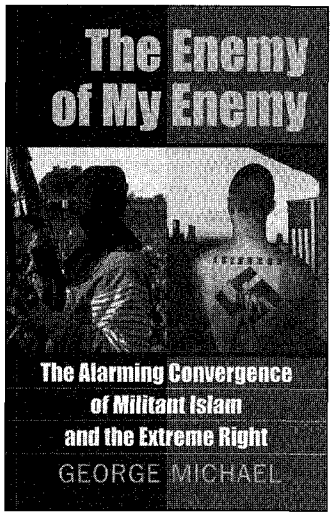
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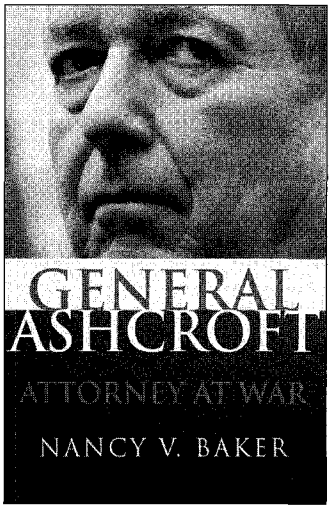
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Continued from page 24

happened on the campaign plane in the year prior." Gore did not return to teach the class in 2002.

It's possible, though, that the class taught something to Gore, because not long after that he began actively seeking to evade the media. On August 7, 2003, Gore headed to New York University to offer one of his first major speeches since his concession address; it was a notably prescient condemnation of the Bush administration's later bellicosity and overreach. But more visionary than the content was the distribution method: the speech was Gore's first—but not his last—offered under the auspices of the online-activism powerhouse MoveOn.org, an alliance that granted Gore a direct conduit to millions of engaged liberal activists nationwide.

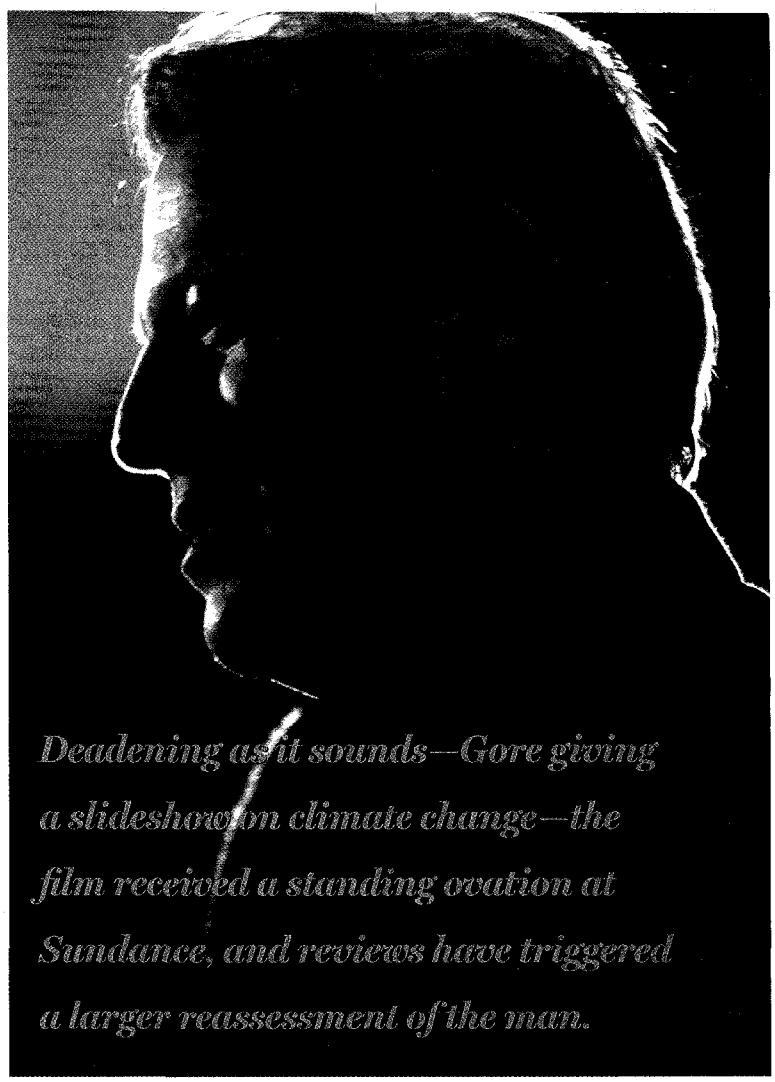
"I know the word fell out of favor after the dot-com collapse," mused Wes Boyd, founder of MoveOn.org, "but he's doing disintermediation. He contacted us in the summer of 2003, said he wanted to give a speech, and was wondering if we'd like to sponsor it. What we lend to it is some of that disintermediation."

Disintermediation is a big word for a type of subtraction, the sort that excludes the middleman (the "mediator"). As a dot-com term, it described producers selling directly to customers rather than working through established retail channels. In Gore's case, it describes a public figure distributing his words directly to the public rather than working through established media outlets.

The reason Gore sought this out, as former FCC Chairman Reed Hundt, Gore's friend since 1961, told me, is that "Gore wants to make change, not be part of the distortive, stifling process of the mainstream media." Speaking into the cameras, the former VP had learned, was like talking into one of those gag gift bullhorns—what came out had little relation to what went in. "Gore's own view," says Hundt, "is that he sighed noisily in the debate and used the wrong telephone line to ask for money and the media said these are momentous events. Meanwhile, they ignore global warming and the failure to catch Osama and the destruction of the safety net."

So Gore sought a way to bypass the filter. Every time he gives a speech under MoveOn's auspices, a guaranteed 3 million MoveOn members get the address blasted directly in their inboxes, where it can be read in full. From there, the speech gets e-mailed around, promoted on the blogs, passed from friend to neighbor—what tech types call "viral marketing." At no point in this process does a news editor or television producer decide which sound bites will be emphasized for ratings. MoveOn allows him to speak on his own terms and individuals to distribute his speeches on theirs. It's Gore Unplugged, and everyone's got a ticket.

If the Internet is reinventing Gore, though, Gore is using its lessons to reinvent television. His October 2005 speech to the We Media conference was a *tour de force*, ranging from Johannes Gutenberg to Thomas Paine, Walter Lippmann to John Kenneth Galbraith, the historian Henry Steele Commager to the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas. Gore was a know-it-all, and he didn't care if they knew it too. He blasted the media for accepting "fewer reporters, fewer stories, smaller budgets, less travel, fewer bureaus, less independent judgment, more vulnerability to influence by management, and more dependence on government sources and canned public relations hand-outs," for chasing sensationalism and conflict, for becoming "dumbed-down and tarted-up." He lamented that "the inherent value or validity of political propositions put forward by candidates for office is now largely irrelevant compared to the advertising campaigns that shape the perceptions of voters." But most of all, he decried television's unidirectionality. "[A]long with my partner, Joel Hyatt, I am trying to work within the medium of television to recreate a multi-way conversation that includes individuals and operates according to a meritocracy of ideas."



Deadening as it sounds—Gore giving a slideshow on climate change—the film received a standing ovation at Sundance, and reviews have triggered a larger reassessment of the man.

That's the vision for Current Television. Hyatt, the wealthy son-in-law of former Ohio Senator Howard Metzenbaum, is probably best known for founding Hyatt Legal Services, whose commercials he'd close with "I'm Joel Hyatt and you have my word on it!" Hyatt was the Democratic Party's finance chair during Gore's campaign, and their partnership only deepened after the election. The two attempted to buy *The New Republic* in 2001; when that failed, they began to dream about something far bigger than a political weekly, eventually amassing enough money to take over the Newsworld International Network (an international news channel reaching 20 million homes and mainly playing Canadian Broadcasting Corporation content) and replace it with their participant-driven, short-form creation.

When Gore announced the project, the assumption was that he would take aim at Fox News and the accelerating rightward bent of the cable media. But when Current was finally explained, those fears—and hopes—were laid to rest: Gore wasn't launching a challenge, he was just promoting a channel of home movies

RICK WILKING/REUTERS/LANDOV

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hosted by hipsters. Or so went the CW, with even *The Nation* magazine running a cover story on the channel with a photo of Gore ludicrously bedecked in hip-hop garb.

But Current, in fact, represents a far more fundamental assault on the news networks than anyone expected. If the problem with television is that the audience can't talk back to the flickering box, then the answer, clearly, is to have them talk through it. Thus, Current devotes a large chunk of its programming hours to viewer-contributed content. The Web site offers instructions on how to create videos ("pods"), which amateur auteurs then upload to www.Current.tv. The Current community then watches and rates the pods online, elevating the better ones, eventually, into rotation on the channel. The content is surprisingly strong—including everything from clever, animated political shorts to reports from the Katrina-devastated Gulf and even a poignant, artfully done pod following a birth—but the response has been tepid. No matter. If the revolution is indeed to be televised, it'll be because Current helps do for television what blogs have done to punditry: democratize it, decredentialize it, open it to the masses.

The one guy who's not contributing much content to Current is Gore himself. But he's been making his own pod. On May 26, Paramount Pictures will release "An Inconvenient Truth," a made-for-theatres version of Gore's digitized global-warming movie presentation. (Hundt says Gore views global warming as "the biggest challenge this species ever faced, the ultimate nightmare of technology, the ultimate nadir of pure capitalism unfettered.") Deadening as it sounds—Gore giving a slideshow on climate change—the film received a standing ovation at Sundance and excellent reviews that seemed to leapfrog consideration of the work and trigger a larger reassessment of the man. *The Village Voice*'s Amy Taubin called him Sundance's Celeb of the Week, and marveled at all the attendees saying, "He's so amusing. Why wasn't he more like that when he was running?" Kim Voyner at Cinematical.com was similarly appreciative, writing, "Gore is surprisingly entertaining, peppering the salad of scientific facts he serves up with sparks of humor, wit, and insight that frankly, I didn't know he had in him." Pretty good for a project tiptoeing so close to self-parody.

When Gore endorsed Howard Dean in 2004, it wasn't a repudiation of his old running mate, Lieberman. It was a repudiation of himself.

It used to be that an out-of-power political figure who lacked media relevance but wanted to perpetuate his message had to devote his life to stumping across the country and belting out endless speeches in thousands of locales, still reaching only a fraction of the interested public. So, taking a page from Apple founder Steve Job's book, Gore is working smarter, not harder. The nature of his film has rendered it possible for Americans everywhere to absorb his ideas unfiltered. And the audience won't stop with filmgoers. Gore's presentation will be repackaged and offered—free—to science classrooms across the country. If this generation insists on ignoring global warming, maybe the next one, incited by the world's most widely viewed and slickly produced slideshow on atmospheric science, won't.

Out of office, Gore's passion for issues hasn't changed. Indeed, it has intensified, the excitement of a wonk whose obsessions have suddenly exploded into relevancy. Bruce Reed, president of the centrist Democratic Leadership Council (the DLC, which Gore was once closely identified with) and former-domestic policy advisor in the Clinton White House, laughed that "it's not the politics of climate change that made him want to do a documentary on it. For 25 years he's tried to get people interested. ... This is a guy who, in the late 1980's, went to the South Pole and brought back home movies of penguins playing on the ice surrounded by senators in parkas and wrote about it for *The New Republic*."

Gore's policy involvement has stretched beyond his crusade against global warming; his speeches shredding the rationale for the invasion of Iraq were true ripsnorters, and his recent address on the National Security Agency's domestic spying program, symbolically delivered on the birthday of the oft-surveilled Martin Luther King Jr., evinced a clarity, fearlessness, and wider vision all too absent from the nightly news. Other addresses have reached similar rhetorical heights, confronting a score of weighty issues with a thoughtful, even soaring, eloquence that has restored Gore's reputation by glittering in contrast to the leaden rhetoric of contemporary Democratic leaders.

But it has been a strange trajectory, like watching a corporate yes-man regress back into an idealistic teenager—Al Gore goes Bulworth. And never was it so stunning as when he endorsed Howard Dean's candidacy in December 2003, throwing his institutional weight behind the Democratic field's anti-establishment, pugilistic, liberal champion. In doing so, he snubbed Joe Lieberman, his running mate from four years earlier. But what all the commentators who fretted about Gore's etiquette missed was that the Dean endorsement wasn't a repudiation of Lieberman, but a repudiation of Gore.

That's because Dean, in 2000, was the anti-Gore: a fiery outsider running against the equivocating Democrats—like Al Gore—of yesteryear. (Fun fact: Dean almost mounted a primary challenge against Gore in 2000). He was also running the way Gore wished he had run. The Dean campaign's architect, Joe Trippi, told me, "What I've learned from people who are close to Gore was that, had he gone in 2004, he had this vision of running a disintermediated, Internet-driven, decentralized campaign. His vision was the Dean campaign! So one of the things that attracted him to the Dean campaign was that he looked and saw that, 'Holy shit, these guys are running the campaign I wanted to run.'"

In endorsing Dean, Gore did more than signal support for the chaotic, democratized nature of the campaign. For a wonk like Gore, the endorsement of Dean—the DLC's bête noire during the 2004 primaries—was an embrace of the new "it" Democrat. If the DLC's "New Democrats," led by Clinton and Gore, were the buzz-

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worthy wing of the Democratic Party in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the 2004 election ushered in their successors, led by Dean.

Call them the New New Democrats, MoveOn Democrats, or whatever you want. They were the liberal response to Clinton's triangulation and Bush's ascension. Gleefully pugilistic, fiercely opposed to the Iraq War, deeply distrustful of a "corporate media" they believe screwed Gore specifically and Democrats generally, and proudly unapologetic about the progressive agenda, they found their first champion in Dean and, in Gore, their most surprising convert.

Gore, after all, had been one of only a handful of House Democrats to support the first Gulf War. In 2000, he slammed Bill Bradley's expansive health-care plan from the right, spoke in dusty generalities, and reduced liberalism to a "lockbox." He was considered so mealy-mouthed and corporatized that Ralph Nader's lefty insurgency gained genuine momentum with a message based mainly around the assertion that Gore and Bush were indistinguishable.

So it was a shock when, in 2002, he dispensed with the equivocating and endorsed a full-blown single-payer solution to health care, going further than even Bradley had dared. When he unleashed a blistering assault on the proposed invasion of Iraq, decried the corporatization of American media, and endorsed Dean, it became clear that this was not the Gore of yore.

None of this has passed unnoticed. On the blogs, in the magazines, on the op-ed pages, and across the punditocracy, "Gore 2008" is simultaneously a rallying cry and a guessing game. Handicapping his rise has been one of the few unifying activities in contemporary political life, with everyone from Arianna Huffington to Tony Blankley to Dick Morris talking up his chances, and Gore asymptotically approaching, but never actually offering, a Shermanesque rejection of the enterprise.

To be clear, there is no sign that Gore is preparing for a campaign. His spokesperson, Josh Cherwin, assured me that "there is no '08 story." MoveOn's Wes Boyd notes that Gore has not parlayed his association with MoveOn into a fund-raising list. He has built no personal Web site, and Markos Moulitsas Zunigas, founder of DailyKos, the largest progressive political blog, noted in an e-mail that Gore has made no effort to engage with the netroots save for his association with MoveOn. "I'm personally focused on elections," he wrote, "and in that regard, he's yesterday's news and will remain so unless he decides to reenter electoral politics."

In past years, the moment at which Gore had to make that decision would have been rapidly approaching. When Gore decided to sit out the 2004 election, *The New Republic* reported that many of his associates blamed the grueling, crushing fund raising the campaign would have demanded. Not so now. Planned or not, Gore's alliance with MoveOn and Dean's army of online volunteers has ensured him unique access and affection among one of the richest, most easily activated cash sources in the Democratic Party. Trippi estimates that a well-timed entrance, under certain conditions, could raise Gore $50 million almost instantly, and hundreds of millions more if he won the nomination. "Remember," he told me, "McCain in 2000 has 40,000 people sign up on the web and raises a couple million bucks. A few years later Howard Dean raises $59 million. The next [netroot darling] is going to be as exponential as Dean was to McCain."

And it could be Gore, if he wants it. Here's the scenario: Hillary Clinton continues rolling forward, amassing establishment support and locking down the large donors. Anti-Hillary voters prove unable to coalesce around a single champion, so Clinton is able to suck up all the oxygen but, as with most faits accomplis, attracts little genuine enthusiasm. At the same time, her hawkishness and ostentatious moderation sparks widespread disillusionment among the online activist community. Inevitably, the liberal wing of the party begins calling for a Bigfoot of its own to enter the primary, and the obvious prospect is Gore. Draft-Gore.com, which already exists, amplifies the drumbeat, collecting pledges and holding events. The press corps, sensing a Godzilla vs. King Kong battle, begins covering the events. As Marty Peretz, publisher of *The New Republic* and a longtime friend of Gore, says, "if he were to find that there was some groundswell for him, I think it would be hard to resist."

But not impossible. Long-standing associates of Gore's say his appetite for a second campaign seems to depend, at least partially, on whether he judges it an issue-based endeavor that allows him to continue speaking out on matters of substance or just another round of dodging media-narratives and churlish characterizations. If Gore's experiments in disintermediation pan out, the 2008 campaign may prove a very different undertaking from 2000's.

The fund raising will be easier. So will the communication. Rather than speaking through the press, Gore would be able to blast out speeches on e-mail, post videos on the Internet, release statements on a blog, use online organizing tools to empower the grassroots. The question is whether those distribution channels will have matured to the point that they could serve as primary communication methods for a successful presidential campaign. Because, as Reed Hundt warns, "if you're using the new medium to get across a new message, but you believe that really the new medium is just a way to get back into the old medium, you're doomed."

IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE THAT GORE DOESN'T WISH TO CORrect the record on himself, rewrite his legacy. In a sense, that's what he's been doing since 2000. Andrei Cherny, a former close aide of Gore's interviewed for this piece, protested that "Gore was never a prototypical New Democrat. He never thought of himself that way. ... There were a lot moments of overlap, but he always had a much more populist streak than the DLC did. Partly his father's son, that old southern populist tradition."

Since his loss, that old populist tradition has burst through the membranes of caution and ambition that once constrained it, and Gore has exploded back into the Democratic consciousness. In the late 1980s, his reputation as a New Democrat propelled him to the party's vanguard; in 1992, it netted him the vice presidency. Today, his leadership as a New New Democrat, enabled by his disintermediated communication strategies, has begun restoring his reputation among liberals and allowed him to step forth from the wreckage of 2000 as a progressive statesman. The question, of course, is whether he could retain that standing in the chaos of a presidential campaign. The Internet may well have reinvented Gore, but for Gore, the issue may be whether it's done the same to politics. **TAP**

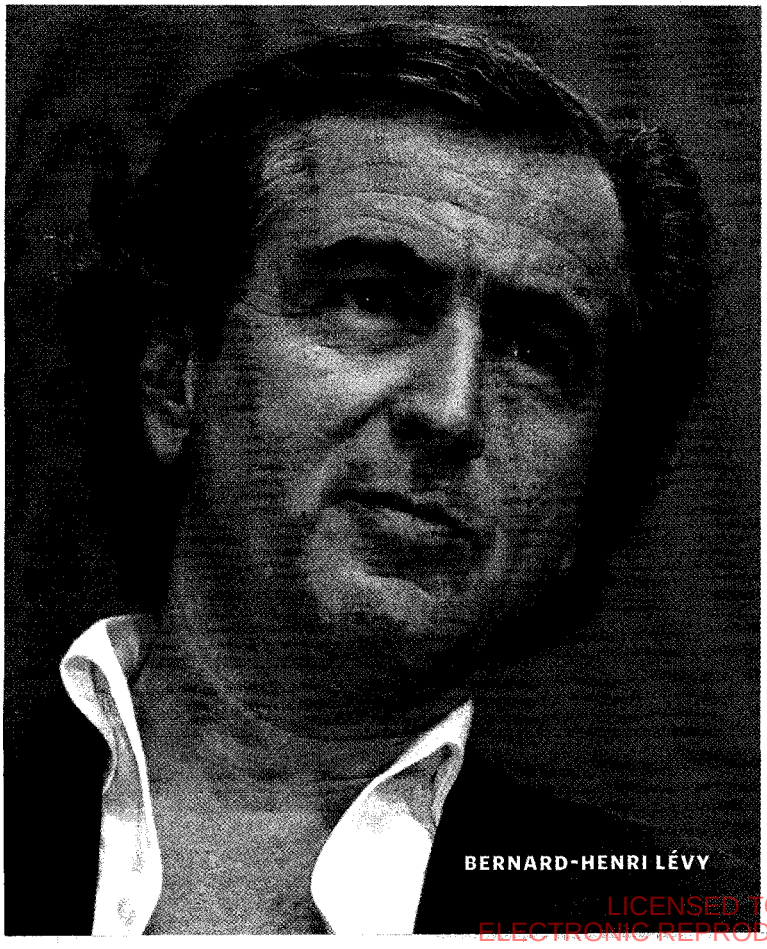
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Arguing the World

Bernard-Henri Lévy and **Anatol Lieven** spar on Iraq, Iran, Bush, the neoconservatives, the Cold War, Hamas, Napoleon, Robespierre ...

JUST BEFORE THE HOLIDAYS, BERNARD-HENRI LÉVY, FRANCE'S MOST influential intellectual, contacted the *Prospect* offering to write an essay on the future of neoconservatism. Aware that his views on the matter were not wholly consonant with ours, he also suggested that he'd be open to a "spirited dialogue" on such questions as: Have the neoconservatives accomplished anything positive? Have they advanced any notions from which liberalism and the left could learn? What of the effort to spread global democracy? What's the legacy of the Iraq War? How to deal, in the war's aftermath, with totalitarian regimes?

We knew just the fellow to engage him. Anatol Lieven is British by birth and spent most of his career as a journalist in South Asia and the former Soviet Union. A fellow at the New America Foundation, he has lived in the United States for five years and has become one of neoconservatism's harshest intellectual critics.

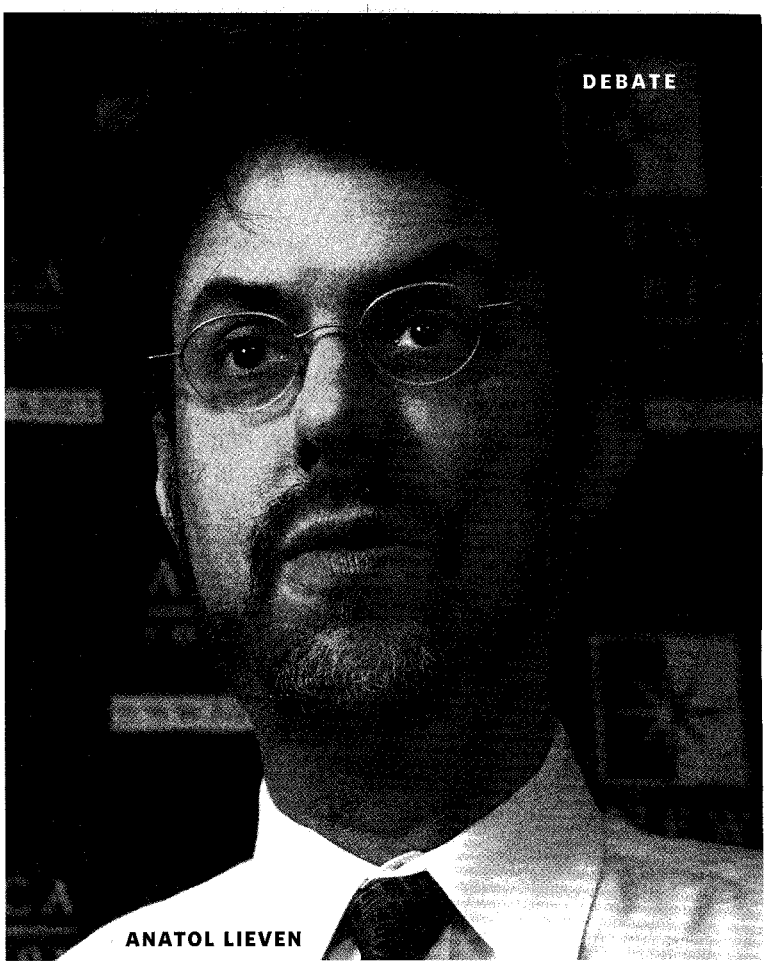


BERNARD-HENRI LÉVY

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On a Saturday in mid-January, BHL and Lieven conducted the following exchange in real time via e-mail (Lévy's last entry came a short while later). It is a fascinating discussion of the great questions about America and the world with which liberals must grapple as we inch toward the post–Bush era. These pages feature a condensed version of their exchange. We strongly urge you to read the full, 10,000-word dialogue at www.prospect.org.

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ANATOL LIEVEN

ANATOL LIEVEN: Dr. Lévy, we agree on many things about America and the world. However, to judge by your latest book, we disagree quite strongly on the subject of the neoconservative movement, its historical meaning, and above all its moral quality. ...

The success of the neoconservatives lay not in their originality, but, on the contrary, in the fact that they took deep and ancient strains in the American national tradition and then used particular events to give these strains a radical twist. The first of these is the old American belief, rooted both in the Protestant tradition and in American civic nationalism, in America's right and duty to spread its democratic model to the rest of the world (the "American Nationalist Thesis"). The second, antithetical, strain is a strong degree in many American quarters of hatred, contempt, and fear directed at the rest of the world—the "paranoid style" of American populist nationalism analyzed by Richard Hofstadter and his intellectual descendants.

Another vital element is the existential needs of the military-industrial and academic-bureaucratic security structures that grew up during the Cold War and were orphaned and endangered by the end of that struggle. Finally, there is the passionate defense of Israel. This is a legitimate and praiseworthy motive in itself. Tragically, however, a belief that this means backing the Israelis unconditionally in their confrontation with the Palestinians inevitably points toward a wider confrontation with the Arab and Muslim worlds.

The historical conjunctures the neoconservatives exploited so brilliantly were the end of the Cold War and, of course, September 11. The end of the Cold War deprived the American establishment of its only real intellectual paradigm for understanding the world and the conduct of U.S. world policy. The collapse of Communism appeared to leave free-market liberal capitalism as the only global model for progress; and most dangerously, the collapse of the Soviet superpower appeared to make the United States practically omnipotent on the planet, free to do anything if only it possessed the "will" to do so. ... As Bush's recent speeches make clear, the messianic rhetoric of spreading "democracy" and "freedom" is more than ever the core of the administration's "strategy" in the Muslim world. It is highly doubtful that this really represents the beliefs of Dick Cheney or Donald Rumsfeld, or even Condoleezza Rice, in a way that it really did represent the core beliefs of Paul Wolfowitz.

Rather, the administration is emphasizing democratization because it doesn't have anything else to do or say. It cannot adopt a sensible diplomatic strategy toward a solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, or toward détente with key regional players like Iran. And with Iraq crippling the U.S. budget, it is impossible to ask Congress for the kind of economic aid for Muslim countries that would give the long-term construction of democracy there a real chance.

The problem with emphasizing democratization in this way is that it is radically incompatible with the actual policies of the Bush administration in the war on terror, as fully encouraged and supported by the neoconservatives. This contradiction between ideals and realpolitik was always there in U.S. policy. The neoconservatives and the Bush administration, however, have raised this contradiction to surreal, virtually Orwellian heights. They believe in spreading human rights and the rule of law? So they kidnap suspected terrorists and have them tortured in illegal U.S. prisons and in those of Muslim dictatorships whose human-rights records they publicly profess to despise. They want to bring democracy to the Muslim world? So they act with brazen contempt for the opinions of the vast majority of ordinary Muslims in democracies like Turkey and Indonesia.

The Bush administration and the neoconservatives believe in free elections? So every time this seems likely to bring victory for Islamist forces, they veer back to support for dictatorship. They respect ordinary Iraqis and believe they are ready for democracy? They respect them so much that they try to foist Ahmed Chalabi on them as a U.S.-backed dictator, and they share the general approach of the U.S. military, which respects them so much that it doesn't bother to count how many of them it accidentally kills.

This is not idealism, but a sick joke. ... It bears the same relationship to real democratic thinking as Soviet Communism did to the original ideals of Marxism.

BERNARD-HENRI LÉVY: You put me in a difficult spot already. Yes, yes, you put me in a difficult spot. Because I really did not feel like starting this conversation by making myself look like an advocate for Bush and the neoconservatives.

You read my book, right? You read the portrait I make of this poor Bush as a child, à la Georges Bernanos, overwhelmed by

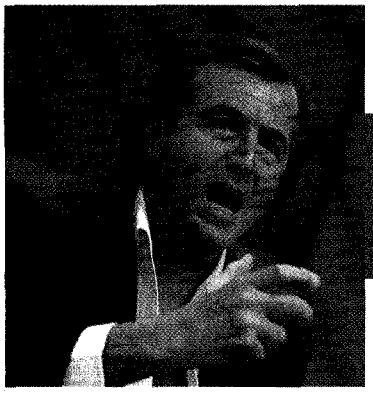
DENNIS BRACK

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what is happening to him, frightened by the world and trying to frighten it back?

You read my chapter entitled "The Revenge of the Little Man," as well as the many chapters where I express my nostalgia for the true great America, that of John Kennedy, that of Bill Clinton even, that in which people like John Kerry or Barack Obama could be the continuators?

It has not escaped you either, I imagine, that I have been from the beginning against this damned war in Iraq, whose main effect has been, for the moment, to increase the number of terrorists in the area and to intensify this war of civilizations in which fundamentalist Muslims and Samuel Huntington are equally enthusiastic advocates? ...



I would like it if the camp of humanistic America were to go back to the topic of refusing the culture of excuses concerning the new terrorism.

In short, they are not my friends.

But at the same time, there are things in what you write that I cannot let slide, either. No matter how much one doesn't like this poor Chalabi, for instance, and the ridiculous attempt to put him in the saddle in Baghdad, I do not believe that one can present him as a "U.S.-backed dictator" whom they tried hard to impose in office by gunfire.

No matter what one thinks of the "general approach of the U.S. military," no matter what one thinks of an event like Abu Ghraib, I do not believe that one can seriously claim that the main responsibility for the deaths of Iraqis today lies on us, and that one can forget the suicide bombers, the booby-trapped cars, the blind shootings; in short, Iraqi terrorism (Islamist or ex-Baathist) and its incommensurable lack of consideration, of all things, for the life of civilian Muslims.

And then: No matter what one thinks of this idiotic war ... it is just not honest to deny the positive effects it has also had; for example, the freedom of the press, the end of the dictatorship, free elections, and the fact that an increasing number of Iraqis are starting to enter this democratic culture you disparage. ...

History being what it is—a complex cacophony, a concert of mixed voices and ambiguous meanings in which you are never, except in extreme cases, a total angel or a total devil—I recognize that the neoconservatives have two or three real merits.

One merit: making politics with ideas. Or reintroducing, if you prefer, the old philosophical consideration of the "types of regimes" in conducting international politics. Say what you want, but between a real politician without scruples and a reader of Leo Strauss or Aristotle injecting moral considerations into the way he does politics, my heart leans towards the latter.

Another merit: to privilege, among these ideas, what involves promoting democratic principles and actually spreading Western universalism in Muslim countries. I am not saying that the program is respected. I don't deny that it is, at the very least, strange, when one says he is a democrat, to accept Guantanamo or the secret prisons of Central Europe. But one can't deny that it is a program. And between this right wing and the right wing of old times—between people who, even awkwardly, even by committing mistakes or crimes, think that America's role is to work for worldwide democracy and those who, like Henry Kissinger in his time, considered that its role was to support and reinforce all the dictatorships of the planet—I prefer the former; I prefer the America that defends the heirs of Ahmed Shah Massoud rather than the one that put Augusto Pinochet in power.

And a third merit: the fact of taking seriously the tragic dimension of contemporary history. Or, more precisely, of taking stock of this figure of modern tragedy that is the challenge addressed to all democrats—and not only to those of America!—by the Muslim radicals and sectarians. You talked about Iran. You said that there should be détente with Iran. Agreed. That's all I ask for. But I believe that first it is necessary to take into account the tragedy of the situation. And when I say tragic I mean a situation in which the entire Iranian establishment, including Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, that pleads for the resumption of [nuclear] tests—and therefore for a line of a president who has stated his intention, or rather his dream, to wipe Israel from the map. To notice that this is an extreme danger, and that the democrats of the world are facing a challenge that, all things being equal, is no less frightening than the one formerly presented by Communists and Nazis, what do you want me to say? For now, all I can see are these neoconservatives.

I would like it a thousand times better if others would speak firmly with Iran.

I would like it if the other camp, that of humanistic America, were in more of a hurry to go back to the beloved topics of Michael Walzer, refusing the culture of excuses concerning the new terrorism. ...

AL: ... I am fully aware that you are not a neoconservative and that you have opposed many of their policies including the Iraq War; and for this I praise you. However, both in your book and in your response to my first volley, you also made clear that on certain key points you both sympathize with neoconservative "ideals" and believe that their actual policies either stand a good chance of success, or have no viable alternative, or both.

You also appear to join the neoconservatives in one of their most willfully disastrous intellectual approaches (shared and even encouraged by certain figures who still think they are on the left), which is to muddle up the radically different and mutually hostile forces of al-Qaeda–style Sunni extremism, Shia conservatism (often infused with Iranian nationalism), and Baath-style radical Arab nationalism or fascism. This muddle has even less intellectual justification than the American establishment's previous mud-

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dling up of Soviet, Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Latin American Communism, but may have even more appalling results.

You set up a radical opposition between neoconservative idealism and Kissingerian realpolitik. This is quite false. What you seem to have forgotten is that the neoconservatives initially broke with the liberal Democrats, and began their march toward the Republicans, in large part precisely because of their belief that the United States should continue to wage war in Vietnam by all necessary means, however ruthless.

What is more, when the Carter administration tried to make human rights and democracy the centerpiece of its international strategy, the neoconservatives were the first to denounce this as hopelessly naive and to insist that America continue to support the Shah of Iran against his population and a variety of blood-stained Central American military regimes against their "Communist" opponents. Idealism, anyone? How exactly was this different from Kissinger's belief that American vital interests, and the defense of Western democracy, often required support for anti-Communist dictatorships?

What the neoconservatives see as American vital interests will always trump their professed ideals. This makes them not idealists, but a species of revolutionary realists. However, like most revolutionaries, they are realists whose capacity for ruthlessness is considerably enhanced by their genuine belief that they are deeply moral and that "the winds of history are in their sails," to use the old Communist phrase. This is a classically Jacobin mixture, and, as Robespierre himself came belatedly to recognize, "no one likes armed missionaries." The French attempt back then to spread a mixture of revolutionary values and French empire across Europe led not to a triumph for liberalism or democracy, but a series of dreadful wars ending in the triumph of European reaction backed by a furious German, Russian, and British nationalist response to French conquest. People who sympathize with neoconservative ideas about changing the world by force while expanding American imperial power should watch out that this does not lead them, step after logical step, to Kissingerian or dare I say it even Napoleonic positions. ...

On Iran: Obviously all members of the Iranian establishment share certain positions, but to suggest an absolute identity of views between men like Rafsanjani and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is a travesty. If this were the case, then why has Ahmadinejad's election made such a difference? ... Figures like Ahmadinejad must be opposed and weakened; but that can successfully be done only by not making blowhard speeches in the West and by dealing with other Iranians.

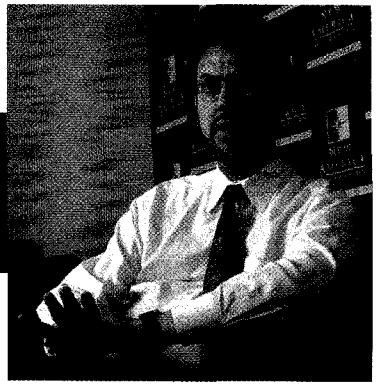
That, unfortunately, means dealing with unpleasant but pragmatic characters like Rafsanjani, and by offering them a choice between tough sanctions and real benefits in return for giving up their nuclear program. If the neoconservatives had encouraged the Bush administration to take this approach four years ago, instead of lumping Iran in the "axis of evil," then as likely as not we would not have Ahmadinejad in power today. That is not just a realist but a realistic position. We have to put pressure on the Iranians, but in the end we either have to negotiate with them—or fight them. Can we fight them, given the experience of Iraq? And if we do fight Iran, will it be the neoconservatives and their children who will do the fighting and dying? We know the answer to that one.

BHL: We obviously agree on colonialism and its alleged "civilizing" mission. ... We also agree on Napoleon and even on Robespierre, these two terrible characters, these two stains on the history of my country: In my opinion, they always were the inventors of terror; two different terrors, agreed; but terror in both cases and, in a certain way, the origin of what today we call terrorism. I said this in France; here again, I will not say the opposite in the United States. ...

No. The disagreement is elsewhere. And, if I were to define it, I would say that it can be summarized into three points.

First, this business of Communism. ... I was enough of a Marxist to understand the nuances, even the quarrels, and sometimes the deadly fights among these various types of Communism. But that did not prevent me from also understanding what brought them together. That did not prohibit me, like Andrei Sakharov and the dissidents, from also understanding the essence that they had in common and that, in fact, when the time came, made them implode and disappear en masse.

Then, the issue of Iran. I am not saying that there is an "absolute identity of views between men like Rafsanjani and Ahmadinejad." I am saying that there is an identity of views on a point that is *essential,* and that—taking into account the anti-Semitism, anti-Americanism, and hatred of democracy in general that prevail within the establishment of Teheran—it is not a negligible point. This point is the nuclear point. And, on this nuclear point, I think indeed that there is no true alternative within that establishment. So what does it all mean? Does it mean that I preach war against the regime? No, of course not. I do not preach war anymore than I preach compromise. And this is so because, between war and compromise, there is a third term, which I am amazed that you do not seem to consider: it is the support for the Iranian women, the young people, the intellectuals—it is the support for this enormous proportion of the Iranian population that does not recognize itself in any of the official factions but identifies with democratic combat. That's it, yes. ...



For neoconservatives, vital interests will always trump ideals. This makes them not idealists, but a species of revolutionary realists.

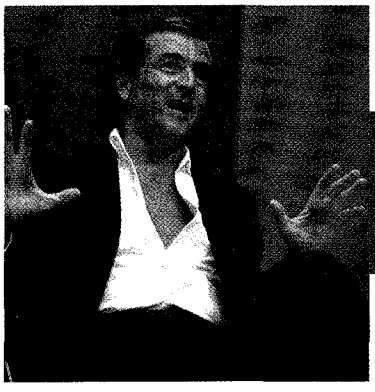
Third, the issue of the two kinds of Islam. Of course, I know the differences between Shiism and Sunnism. ... But no matter

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how radical the cleavage between Sunnis and Shiites, regardless of whether we insist on what opposes them or what sometimes succeeds to unite them, regardless of the depth of what opposes them to all Baath atheists, there is a second cleavage of which you do not seem to think, but which I have the weakness of believing is more essential, more radical, and, for the concrete men and women that populate this world of Islam, of much greater consequence. And this cleavage is the one between democrats and fundamentalists. In recent years, there has been a lot of talk about a "war of civilizations"; when you adopt, as I try to do, the point of view of concrete nations and men, here is the only war of civilizations that holds—here, in this political division, exclusively political, between these two versions of Islam, the most important clash of civilizations of our time. ...

I continue to believe in what we, along with Bernard Kouchner and some others, call the "duty to intervene." I think, more than ever, that it was necessary to intervene in Bosnia. I regret, more than ever, that we did not support Massoud in Afghanistan. I estimated, and I still estimate, that we had, in Rwanda, the duty to intervene. ... I continue to dream of an ambitious foreign policy that would help the simple men and women martyrized by their states in cases such as that of Iran or even, a few years ago, Iraq. And perhaps, in essence, it is *the* great reproach that I feel like making against the neoconservatives: that, with their bad war, their bad policies, their absurd democratic messianism, their errors of perspective and judgment, they have compromised, wasted, and perhaps even discredited this magnificent and necessary duty to intervene—and have caused us, from this point of view, to take a gigantic step backward.

AL: I am delighted that our differences have narrowed to such an extent, and that our long-term hopes are indeed very close. We do, however, continue to have rather different ideas on contemporary strategy. ...



This leads me back to differences in the Muslim world, which I must insist are both greater and more complex than you suggest. Take the case of Massoud, whom you mention. Like you, I too believe that we should have backed him against the Taliban before 9-11. But who did in fact back him, and indeed saved the last remnants of the anti-Taliban opposition from being crushed, and America after 9-11 from facing infinitely greater problems in Afghanistan? Well, it was the Iranians (and Russians)—and precious little thanks have they received for this from us.

But the complexity of his example goes even deeper. Massoud was himself, as you know, a radical Islamist, and his followers in Afghanistan today are deeply conservative and religious Muslims who impose on their women the same crushing oppressions and restrictions common in most of Afghan society. Massoud fought first Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, and then the Taliban, not out of secular opposition to their views, but for two other reasons. The first was that they represented a form of foreign radical Islam—Saudi-based Wahabbism—that he saw as alien to local tradition. Much more important, however, was the fact that these forces represented renewed Pashtun domination, which he and his Panjshiri Tajik people were determined to resist.

Furthermore, the rise of the Taliban among the Pashtuns owed a great deal to the horribly brutal record of Massoud's forces and the other mujahideen groups when they ruled Afghanistan after the overthrow of the Communists in 1992. Once again, that doesn't mean that we shouldn't have supported Massoud against the Taliban; but in doing so, we would have picked not a "representative of Western universalism" in Afghanistan, but only the lesser of two evils—a thoroughly realist strategy, in other words.

And the same kind of melancholy choice faces us across much of the Muslim world, whether it is a case of preferring Rafsanjani to Ahmadinejad, the Assad regime to Syrian radical Islamist groups, or the Shia conservative populists in Iraq to the al-Qaeda–backed Sunni insurgency. If we fail to make these choices, then we will unite our enemies against us—as Israeli actions have brought together Hamas, Hezbollah, and the radical elements of Fatah, and as the American invasion of Iraq has brought together al-Qaeda and the Baath.

When it comes to the very widespread Muslim hostility to Israel—and by extension the United States—we are never going to be able to abolish this, any more than we can abolish various national animosities elsewhere in the world. What we should aim to do is to reduce this from a central issue for many Muslims to a secondary one, and above all to limit the number of people who are prepared to put their hatred into action, rather than just grumbling about it. We will never get Pakistanis to like India, but we may be able to get them to stop attacking India. And in the case of Pakistan, it is of course deeply troubling that some 15 percent of the population support radical Islamist parties—but what we should really be thinking about is how to prevent the remaining 85 percent from joining them. ...

I continue to dream of an ambitious foreign policy that would help the simple men and women martyrized by their states in cases like Iran.

BHL: I am not certain, dear Anatol Lieven, that our dissension is reduced as much as that. ...

On Massoud, I believe that you are mistaken. Of course, yes, there was an Islamist temptation of Massoud. Of course, in his youth, he was close to a movement that was similar to the Muslim Brotherhood. But only in his youth. After that, his evolution was very quick and led him to the antipodes. On the spiritual level, his intellectual guide is not Sayyid Qutb (whom he prob-

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ably never read) but Abou-Hamed Al-Ghazzali (born in Iran in 1058; the Al-Gazel of the Latin scholars, the theorist of an "asceticism" that inspired the "cogito" of Descartes and the author of the admirable *Alchemy of Happiness*, which was, to the end, Massoud's favorite book and whose spirituality had nothing to do with the ultra-ritualistic pharisaism of the fundamentalists). And on the political level you can say what you want of the terrible years 1992-1996, of the tortuous plays of alliances he agreed to carry out or even the tactical coming together with Dostum or, at the very end, with Hekmatyar—you can say what you want about his political errors at the time (even though speaking about the "horribly brutal record of Massoud's forces" seems to me historically exaggerated): It is still true that his action also consisted of defending, in the capital bombarded by the Hezbollah, then the Taliban, the secular constitutional order of the old Afghan monarchy. The female anchors of the television news kept their jobs—and without the veil. All women who were professors, directors of hospitals, civil servants, kept their positions. Whereas in the cities controlled by the Taliban, they were briskly cutting off the feet and fists of petty and serious offenders, Massoud suspended, for four years, in the zone he controlled, the application of the punishments envisaged by Sharia. And I am not talking about the following years, those of his refuge in Panchir, where he still never deviated on the question of women, from this simple line he was going to reaffirm; for example, by signing, in 2000, the charter of the feminist organization Negâr: "The tradition is what it is; one cannot force women to abandon their burqa any more than one can force them to wear it; but my sisters have never worn the veil; my five daughters are studying or will study; I am in favor of the absolute right of women to work, vote, even to be deputies or to govern." ... As far as "radical Islamist," one cannot do better! ...

I am very much afraid of what you call, concerning the Arab-Muslim world, your "melancholy choice."

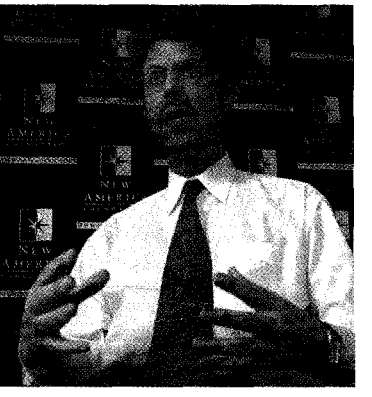
I absolutely reject the idea according to which, under the pretext that they were born there, human rights and principles of secularism and of parliamentary democracy would be ontologically and inevitably related to the soil of the Western culture.

I think, to put things brutally, that there is a true *superiority* of the way of thinking that recognizes a soul's right not to submit, a body's right not to be wounded, a society's right to be represented in forms and by mediations that break away from communitarian rules.

All the rest is differentialism. In other words, it is contempt disguised as respect—or violence embellished with the signs of an untrue and suspect "love of others."

AL: Before dealing with our main theme, which is universal values and how best to promote them, let me return briefly to Afghanistan and Iran. Concerning Massoud, I'm afraid that you may have suffered the fate of many of your compatriots, a certain tendency to be dazzled by his ability to speak French, as well as his great personal qualities of leadership and charm.

Unfortunately, however, his followers did not speak French when dealing with their own compatriots, and were often singularly lacking in charm. My statements about the ideology and behavior of his followers are based both on the clear historical record and on my own personal experience of Afghanistan. Not part of the historical record, but universally acknowledged in private by Western officials and soldiers in Afghanistan, is the fact that—as you must surely be aware—several of his chief former lieutenants and political heirs are leading figures in the Afghan heroin trade today.



Unfortunately, Massoud's followers did not speak French when dealing with their compatriots, and were often singularly lacking in charm.

Don't get me wrong. As already stated, I think we should have supported Massoud against the Taliban. I strongly backed the U.S.-led overthrow of the Taliban after 9-11, and I believe that the West has a clear duty to keep its forces in Afghanistan until that country is stabilized and developed, even if this takes decades (which it probably will). But if American soldiers have a duty to risk their lives in Afghanistan, then experts in the West have a duty to help present our governments with a realistic and accurate assessment of that country, and not with comforting fairy tales.

On Iran. ... The question is how best to promote, in Iran and throughout the Muslim world, the universal values of democracy and human rights in which we both believe. As you said, these values are of Western origin *(d'origine occidentale)* but are no longer Western-defined or restricted to the West. I certainly did not suggest that non-Western peoples are incapable of democracy. India, South Korea, Japan, and other states are obvious examples to the contrary. ...

My own view is, however, that the promotion of democracy and the promotion of our security interests are best pursued separately and at two levels. Unless we are prepared to fight war after war—and Iraq has shown not just the folly but the impossibility of that—then the latter requires the kind of pragmatic deals with existing regimes that I have described.

But that does not mean that we are abandoning our promotion of democracy any more than a whole set of pragmatic deals with the Soviet regime meant that we had abandoned the promotion of democracy in the Soviet bloc. For the fact is that by far the best promoter of democracy throughout the world is the power of our example. During the Cold War, we had to contain Soviet Communism by military means, and we had to appeal to the rebellious nationalism of its subject peoples. But

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what brought that system down in the end was that our system so very obviously worked much better than the Communist one: It was vastly freer, richer, less oppressive, more stable, more tolerant, and more just.

This means that we have to be careful that the local examples of democracy that we support are visibly better than their authoritarian neighbors. This is something that we have failed to do in much of Latin America in recent decades, resulting in a series of populist and semi-authoritarian backlashes against corrupt, brutal, oligarch-ruled pseudo-democracies.

But above all, we must preserve our own democratic model as one that visibly defends freedom at home, guarantees basic economic security to the mass of its population, defends the weakest elements of society, and pursues peace, cooperation, and development abroad. If we do this, then in the end people all over the world will want to abandon their own failed systems and adopt ours, just as the Eastern bloc peoples did.

And this, in the end, is my most bitter accusation against the neoconservatives and the Bush administration, one in which I believe you may well wish to join: that by a whole set of actions at home and abroad, they have badly damaged the image of American democracy in the world. By doing so, they have also damaged the attractiveness of democracy in general, and strengthened the arguments of democracy's enemies. This has been their fundamental betrayal of the ideals of which they profess to be the archdefenders. For this, I believe, they will be cursed by posterity.

BHL: ... In your last round there are three ideas, or three presuppositions, which seem to me to be quite problematic and which, I realize, condense fairly well, in fact, our recent differences of opinion.

1. To pursue at the same time, you say, meaning "separately and at two levels," these two distinct objectives, which are "the promotion of democracy" and "the promotion of our security interests." ... I don't think that this works. In reality, [it's] either one or the other, and complacency with regard to "murderer" states always turns against their people. You cite the example of the former U.S.S.R. You say, to support your thesis: We succeeded well, at the time, in establishing a series of "pragmatic deals with the Soviet regime" without, however, abandoning "the promotion of democracy in the Soviet bloc." That's just it! I don't see where you get that we continued, despite our "deals," to occupy ourselves with promoting democracy in Eastern Europe. Because the reality of the time is, as you well know, that we abandoned the Soviet people like dogs and that we resigned ourselves, truly resigned ourselves, to their poor destiny. ... That's how it happened yesterday. And that's how it will happen tomorrow.

2. Before promoting them abroad, begin to strengthen democratic principles at home. ... You seem to say: "wait, before you consider exporting it, until your own democracy is in good order." You act as if democracies had to be quite certain that the laboratory is impeccable before "pursu[ing] peace, cooperation, and development abroad" and especially before seeing enslaved peoples experience ecstasy in the face of the superiorities of the democratic systems.

It's a joke, I hope. Because democracy, being what it is, an interminable social and political regime of literally infinite perfection... [o]ne can wait a long time if waiting for it to be perfect. And, especially, I hope it is very clear, in your spirit as it is in mine, that, even in the most imperfect, the most underachieved, even the most egotistic, the least compassionate, the most "Bush-ist" of democracies, the concern for the "weakest" and the will to defend "freedom at home" is already a billion times stronger than among the Sudanese, the Syrians, or the Chinese. And if they don't want to have it today, they don't want it at all, and that if their spirits don't evolve, they won't want more when we have perfected our own system even more. ...

3. And then, finally, I cannot accept your kind of democracy that should avoid denouncing, for example, the building of arsenals of weapons of mass destruction. Because this requirement, dear Anatol Lieven, is evidently part of the package. The renunciation, in Iran, of the will to wipe Israel off the map is an integral part of its democratic culture in formation. The recognition, by the Pakistanis, that reform of their secret services, which are corrupted by Islamism and by nuclear-istic ideology, is the prerequisite for building (even a rough outline of) a serious state of law is an obligatory point of passage for the country where Daniel Pearl died, in order to rejoin the community of civilized nations. ...

Let's consider for an instant the case of the Palestinians. You have two possible attitudes in response to the recent victory of Hamas. The attitude that, in effect, consists of saying: "It's already enough that they voted; we are not going to, in addition, ask them to adapt to our standards by objecting to, for example, the anti-Semite folly of their most radical elements." Or you have the attitude, which is mine, which says that by reasoning thus you mock the Palestinians, you take them for morons or subjects of no definitive law, and on top of it you accept, bordering Israel, the third point of a triangle of death whose other two points are Iran and Syria: If you reason like this, then you must immediately say to the people of the West Bank and Gaza, without waiting, that they have brought themselves to an impasse, that there is no democracy at all that is even thinkable on such a putrid basis and that they have to take responsibility by getting rid of, as soon as possible, these bad leaders, who are kind of like Nazis. ...

Democracy is the opposite of Nazism. That is what must be said without delay. You cannot be half democrat and half Nazi; this is the message that the international community, the intellectuals, and the people, must send out without delay. Will this slow down the process again? Maybe in the short term. But probably not in the long term. Because the moral code of truth is really the best ally of the democratic will. **TAP**

Bernard-Henri Lévy *is the author of* American Vertigo: Traveling America in the Footsteps of Tocqueville *and* Who Killed Daniel Pearl?, *among other works.* ***Anatol Lieven*** *is the author of* America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism. *His next book,* Through Humility to Victory: Ethical Realism and the Great Capitalist Peace, *co-authored with John Hulsman, will be published this fall by Random House.*

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Culture & Books

"Valelly's work demonstrates the fragility of coalitions that have periodically formed to safeguard the participation of minorities."

—PAGE 40



MEDIA

THE HARDER HE BLOWS

It may sound strange to ask what's happened to Chris Matthews. But in recent months, he's been even worse than usual. No. We're serious.

BY TODD GITLIN

CHRIS MATTHEWS BLOWS HARD. This may sound less like a news flash than a crashing redundancy. And it's true that yelling is nothing new for the omnipresent MSNBC/CNBC barking head, for whom picking up the pace and pumping up the volume almost always substitute for picking apart the fairy tales that keep the Bush White House intact. But in recent months Matthews' obsequiousness toward his favorites and nastiness toward his bêtes noires have ballooned to new proportions. He's told Tom DeLay, for instance, "You are not in this business for the money," and said about incoming House Majority Leader John Boehner, "You can see this man's greatness," while declaring that the country went Republican in the 1994 elections because it was "tired of Hillary Clinton's, you know 'I'm going to run the country' mentality." As the faith-based bubble of George W. Bush goes on veering away from reality—even from reality as seen by many conservative politicians—Matthews, weirdly, is having trouble disengaging, with the one (important) exception of Iraq.

If you think the problem with public-affairs television is that it never scrapes a surface it doesn't like—or that it worships at the altar of power; or that it tilts so far right as to send reason sliding overboard; or that it's alternately boorish and stuffy, then pious and jeering—a cheerily bombastic Chris Matthews would tell you that you're wrong on every count: The problem is that it's *slow*—or used to be. Paying tribute to John McLaughlin, who gave him his start in motormouth television, Matthews once told *The Washington Post*'s Paul Farhi, "To his credit, John knew that speed was the missing element in public-affairs television." *Speed*—that's what we need more of in American life.

Matthews learned his prime televisual lesson from the bullying McLaughlin, who kept his show, *The McLaughlin Group*, moving with fatuous prophecies, bolting from subject to subject before anybody could go off-message and flattering listeners into thinking that they'd just garnered the skinny from insiders. With his piping tones and a half-cherubic, half-self-regarding smile, Matthews uses his frantic manner to signal that he's above the gritty work of serious journalism—or argument.

Matthews is always running aground as he zooms rightward. On the eve of the State of the Union address, he did call Bush "a president who, for four years, has said one thing and done another," but few of his interviews push the point home. Personal admiration triumphs. September 11 was not proof of the president's failure but "the moment of the president's greatest heroism." You'd never know that the charmer in chief had gone so wrong in Iraq or Louisiana, or on medical care for Americans. The only problem Matthews has recently hinted at is that Dick Cheney has somehow acquired too much power—as if Bush were not colluding with the vice president. Poor, well-meaning czar, victim of nasty old Rasputin.

Matthews has a visceral love for tough guys with the common touch, as opposed to creepy wimps like Al Gore, who, he said in 2000, "would lick the bathroom

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floor to be president" and "doesn't look like one of us. He doesn't seem very American, even." Contrast Matthews on Bush: "Sometimes it glimmers with this man, our president, that kind of sunny nobility," he said to *Washington Times* editorial-page editor and former Newt Gingrich minion Tony Blankley.

Matthews always knows who the good guys are. They're mainly Republican. To Chertoff on January 5, four months after Hurricane Katrina, he oozed, "You're doing a great job." To former Bush oil crony, campaign manager, and Commerce Secretary Don Evans, who had just admired the president's "really straight talk" in the State of the Union address, Matthews cooed: "You're one of the good guys. We all like you here. You're great. We wish you were back in Washington because you're a very civil kind of guy, and you're bipartisan, and everybody likes you, and we could use you here in Washington again." "Who knows, who knows?" said Evans. "Be sure to say hello to [Matthews' wife, TV anchor] Kathleen for us." Matthews: "I will. And maybe you'll be chief of staff one of these days." When Democrats are civil, he baits them for mushiness.

Mr. Hardball can also toss some fat ones right down the pipe. For Tom DeLay: "You live modestly. You commute back and forth from Washington to Houston, Texas. Why? What drives you every day?" This is the Tom DeLay who, as House majority leader, in the words of the Associated Press' Larry Margasak and Sharon Theimer, "visited cliff-top Caribbean resorts, golf courses designed by PGA champions and four-star restaurants—all courtesy of donors who bankrolled his political money empire."

Well, long live the old majority leader, long live the new. On February 2, Matthews marveled: "What a coup d'état," and exalted the "new man out there, John Boehner, who has no connection to the history of the leadership," leaving it to David Gergen to mention what MSNBC itself had reported earlier that day—namely, that Boehner had once passed out tobacco-company checks on the floor of the House of Representatives. Matthews added a few moments later: "I like the way Gergen operates. He put that shiv in really good. I like that. Everybody else forgets—forgives and forgets, but not Gergen." You get the sense that Matthews really *does* admire smooth shiv work.

No hero looms as large for Matthews as a war hero, and among war heroes, none looms as large as John McCain, whom he always credits, unironically, for "straight talk." When McCain wrote a sardonic letter to Barack Obama trashing the Illinois senator for daring to disagree over the tactics of lobbying reform, Matthews went into full servility mode. Among his questions to McCain: "Did [Obama] welsh on the deal? Did he double-cross you by going partisan after promising to go bipartisan with you, senator?" While McCain had bashed Obama as "self-interested, posturing, and disingenuous," Matthews commiserated with McCain about "the way in which Obama treated you here."

McCain had bashed Obama as "self-interested and disingenuous," and Matthews commiserated with McCain about how Obama had treated him.

Matthews is most interesting, though, when his heroes collide. Whenever he finds a rugged vet at odds with Republican policy, his circuits jam. So he bent over backward to encourage crusty old Pennsylvania Congressman John Murtha to thump Bush the day after the State of the Union address. "Mr. Murtha," he said, "do you think the president's consciously trying to confuse the American people as to who attacked us on 9-11?" The two Purple Hearts Murtha earned in Vietnam made Matthews wonder aloud more than once just whom Bush meant by his reference to "defeatists." But he was ambivalent about John Kerry. One moment he likened a Kerry ad to the work of a Nazi propagandist: "Who made that ad—Leni Riefenstahl? You know what I'm talking about: a lot of flags." He declared that Kerry "seemed to be saying" in his 1971 war-crimes testimony that "we are all Lieutenant Calleys," a reference to the soldier who was convicted of murder for his role in the My Lai massacre. But he did press hard the Kerry-baiter John O'Neill, and asked the fire-eating Zell Miller, "Do you believe that John Kerry and Ted Kennedy really only believe in defending America with spitballs?"—leading Miller to famously "wish we lived in the day where you could challenge a person [i.e., Matthews] to a duel."

But America's most famous draft dodger and his wife get no passes from Chris Matthews. Like many other of the airwaves' testosterone-supercharged motormouths, Matthews has it in for the Clintons. In the wake of the 1996 election, when Bill Clinton made nice with the Secret Service and the permanent staff of the White House, Matthews asked aloud, "What do those two institutions have in common?" and proceeded to answer his own question: "They're witnesses. ... He's trying to work the jury." The Monica Lewinsky affair was catnip for Matthews: His *Hardball* swelled from a half hour to an hour. Meanwhile, he found Ken Starr sufficiently aggressive to warrant respect. "I'll tell you one thing," Matthews said. "If every prosecutor in this country were as tough as Ken Starr, the streets would be swept of criminals right now." By contrast, Clinton was weak, therefore contemptible. In 1996, Matthews was asking, "Would Bill Clinton ever turn over ... the secretary-of-state job to a real heavyweight like Bill Bradley or George Mitchell and give them the chance to be the big shots?"

And Hillary? Maybe too tough by half. She chews gum. Matthews calls her "Evita." She has to shake "her past image as sort of a Madame Defarge of the left." He says she looks "witchy" when she knocks Bush, and asks rhetorically—as if the problem were strictly tactical—whether "you can set two different tones at the same time, national solidarity and whack the president in the kneecaps the

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same day." He tried to egg Rick Santorum and Boehner—no softies—into calling her "a socialist." Santorum first said yes, then backed away; Boehner said he "wouldn't go that far" (whereupon Matthews asked, "What stops you?").

Matthews sometimes gets fairness points for having once been a Democrat. An expired party card is a useful deflector when critics observe that his guests, his animus, and his vulgarity generally tilt right. As Ronald Reagan discovered long ago, when General Electric's money was being passed around, a Democrat is something to have been way back when, and to have been born again from. It helps a hardball player get away with throwing beanballs. TAP

***Todd Gitlin** is a professor of journalism and sociology at Columbia University and the author, most recently, of* The Intellectuals and the Flag. *Elizabeth Spellmire, Nelson Harvey, and Media Matters for America helped with research for this article.*

BOOKS

ELEPHANT IN THE VOTING BOOTH

BUILDING CONFIDENCE IN U.S. ELECTIONS BY THE COMMISSION ON FEDERAL ELECTION REFORM (CARTER-BAKER COMMISSION) 113 pages, free at american.edu/ia/cfer/report/full_report.pdf

THREE'S A CROWD: THE DYNAMIC OF THIRD PARTIES, ROSS PEROT, AND REPUBLICAN RESURGENCE BY RONALD B. RAPOPORT AND WALTER J. STONE University of Michigan Press, 296 pages, $29.95

THE TWO RECONSTRUCTIONS: THE STRUGGLE FOR BLACK ENFRANCHISEMENT BY RICHARD M. VALELLY University of Chicago Press, 348 pages, $22.50

BY ROBERT KUTTNER

WHAT MAKES A NATION A democracy? Joseph Schumpeter famously concluded that the key criterion is "competition for leadership." For the citizenry to be able to throw the rascals out, the other democratic essentials are logical complements. You can't oust incumbents without tolerably fair elections, which in turn requires free speech and the ability to campaign with adequate resources and without intimidation.

The devil, of course, is in the details, as Americans learned so painfully in 2000 and 2004. Is election administration nonpartisan and fair? Is every vote counted? Does the party of government make systematic efforts to suppress or exclude opposition groups? Is one party or the other grossly advantaged financially?

The legislative system also matters, even if elections are run fairly. The Founders designed American democracy as a balancing act between majority wishes and minority rights. So the United States has structures deliberately aimed at thwarting pure majority rule, including separation of powers, sundry super-majority requirements, and the Electoral College, as well as the nonproportional allocation of seats in the U.S. Senate. (If the Senate's composition reflected the popular vote, the Democrats would today control it.)

In addition, our winner-take-all allocation of nearly all elected offices damps down minority viewpoints. Finally, race has been the great blot on American democracy, beginning with the Constitution itself, in which the Founders ducked the question of slavery to cement the Union. Echoes of that deferral continue to this day with targeted tactics to restrict or dilute black voting.

Richard M. Valelly's magisterial work *The Two Reconstructions* will stand for a long time as the definitive political analysis of racial suppression and redemption in American democracy. Valelly, who wrote on voting participation in the *Prospect*'s very first issue in 1990, here observes that the civic exclusion of blacks, after an agonizing Civil War won their inclusion, stands as a unique case. "No other democracy in the world," he writes, "has ever enfranchised a large group, then disenfranchised it—and then reenfranchised it. Why did the first effort fail? Why has the second succeeded?"

Valelly provides a rich and textured answer by comparing the two reconstructions in every dimension—the coalition politics on which they rested, the role of courts, the dynamics of Southern white resistance, and the legislative and judicial means for securing democracy. Many of the instruments of the second reconstruction, such as federal registrars, were echoes of the aborted first one. Likewise, the subterfuges devised by white supremacists to destroy black suffrage in the late 19th century were often the same ones still deployed, or redeployed, a century later.

The coalition that emerged in 1867-68, Valelly shows, was an alliance of former slaves with white Republicans who believed, morally and politically, that blacks deserved full citizenship. Northern Republicans also depended on the votes of newly enfranchised blacks for their working majority in Congress. But local biracial governing coalitions were too weak to take root in the South.

The disputed federal election of 1876 began a gradual abandonment of blacks by both national parties. As late as 1891, when black Republicans still held significant numbers of elected offices, liberal Republicans of both races made one last attempt in Congress to pass a Federal Election Bill that prefigured the Voting Rights Act of 1965. It was blocked by a filibuster. Courts failed to enforce the 14th or 15th amendments. Within another decade, black voting and officeholding collapsed. In the South, terrorized blacks were pushed back into a condition akin to slavery. In the North, their participation was drastically constrained.

How did the new reconstructionist coalition form? Beginning with World War I, the epic black migration to the North (where blacks could vote) made them an increasing political force. FDR

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could not break the white southern lock on segregation and voting suppression, but he could deliver economic assistance, and blacks began shifting their allegiance to the Democrats. It was Harry Truman in 1948 who first explicitly courted the northern black vote to make up for the loss of "Dixiecrats" on one flank and Henry Wallace Progressives on the other. Valelly demonstrates that increased black support helped Truman to squeak through.

Only with Lyndon Johnson's presidency was black citizenship redeemed. As in the failed first Reconstruction, it took a dramatic expansion of the power of the national government to break the system of black political exclusion anchored in officially sanctioned white-on-black terror. This achievement, too, was the product of unique circumstances: Johnson's accession to the presidency as a southerner determined to leave a civil rights legacy; his supermajority in Congress; the shrewdness and bravery of activists; the brutal retaliation against them witnessed on national television; and the support of the most liberal Supreme Court ever, in contrast to the late 19th-century Court that colluded in black suppression. Even so, Valelly notes that the window of opportunity was necessarily brief. "At some point, northern white backlash would kick in."



The Johnson Treatment: LBJ with Roy Wilkins, James Farmer, Martin Luther King, and Whitney Young

Also, in 1964-65 most Republicans in Congress voted for Johnson's civil rights bills. By 1968, Republicans would sacrifice the black vote to a (white) southern strategy. But while Republicans successfully courted resentful whites, as late as 1981 Ronald Reagan signed a 25-year extension of a strengthened Voting Rights Act. And though Reagan's Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (under Clarence Thomas) and other civil rights agencies gradually backed away from vigorous federal remediation, neither the national Republican Party nor the executive branch of that era actively suppressed black voting.

The civil rights revolution elevated southern black civic participation to almost normal levels, but biracial politics in the former Confederacy remained weak, as the Democratic Party in the deep South became a heavily black party and whites increasingly voted Republican. Even at its peak, as Valelly shows, the legislative handiwork of the 1961-65 coalition was incomplete. For instance, the 1965 Voting Rights Act ingeniously protected back voting, but not black officeholding. The white South responded with crude measures to dilute the black vote and the power of black officeholders, such as at-large voting for local assemblies, run-offs between the top two candidates, annexation of areas with largely white populations, and changing of the responsibilities or terms of elective offices. The 1981 amendments to the Voting Rights Act did address vote dilution in some circumstances, but the political coalition that undergirded the second reconstruction was already past its zenith. With the act up for renewal in 2007, Valelly shows how more conservative courts and new tactics of vote dilution or suppression again put full democracy at risk. "[A]s a country, we still have important business to do."

It took a third party to end slavery. The Republican Party, founded in 1854, was the last new party to replace one of the two major parties (the Whigs). Since Theodore Roosevelt in 1912, H. Ross Perot in 1992 was the only third-party candidate to win a serious national share of the vote. In radical contrast to the Republicans of the 1850s, Perot's Reform Party was less a true party than a personal vehicle. *Three's a Crowd*, by Ronald B. Rapoport and Walter J. Stone, takes the Perot insurgency as their prime case study, but they are out to offer a general theory of third parties.

Rapoport and Stone's work confirms two staples of American political analysis. First, minor parties arise because the two major parties fail to address an important issue (slavery in the 1850s, the "money issue" of the 1890s populists, the budget deficit that fueled Perot's 1992 campaign). Second, the minor party's issue is invariably co-opted by one of the two major parties; the Populist William Jennings Bryan became the Democrats' 1896 standard-bearer, for example, and Bill Clinton, in 1993, became a deficit hawk. The authors quote Richard Hofstadter's memorable line, "Third parties are like bees; once they have stung, they die."

But as the authors astutely show, the brief life of Perot's Reform Party stung the two major parties in complex and paradoxical ways. Perot won 19 percent of the vote—not just because his money could buy visibility, but because he mobilized an army of citizen volunteers attracted to his issues. In California, one paid staffer and 38,000 volunteers collected 1.4 million petition signatures. In assessing how Perot affected the other parties, Rapoport and Stone track a sam-

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ple of Perot activists every two years from 1992 to 2000. At first, Perot, by focusing his attack on George H. W. Bush, helped Clinton win the 1992 election with just 43 percent of the popular vote. But by 1994, Perot voters, still disaffected with politics-as-usual, were assiduously courted by Republicans. Newt Gingrich's "Contract with America" included a balanced-budget amendment and other measures explicitly intended to attract Perot voters. Democrats were working to reduce the deficit, ostensibly Perot's top priority. But Clinton, meanwhile, had embraced the North American Free Trade Agreement, which was anathema to Perot. So in 1994, Perot voters turned against Democratic incumbency and helped the GOP take the House. They were even a factor, the authors demonstrate, in George W. Bush's election in 2000. They were rewarded, ironically, with deficits and trade policies more alarming than the ones Perot deplored in 1992.

Today, the main hidden issue is the failure of either major party to address the declining living standards of at least half of the electorate. If a third party were to arise, it would be either the new centrist party so beloved by pundits (in my view, one already exists—the Democrats) or a left-populist party organized to raise pocketbook issues. But Ralph Nader, perhaps the best-known leftist, notably fizzled, and no new third-party effort is on the horizon.

How else might dormant issues and torpid citizens be brought to life? In recent years, there has been renewed interest in novel balloting systems like instant runoff voting (IRV). With instant runoff, the voter ranks candidates and can cast heartfelt votes without worrying about playing spoiler. As candidates are eliminated from the bottom, votes are reallocated to the voter's second choice. IRV advocate Steven Hill, author of the fine 2002 book *Fixing Elections*, contends that the current winner-take-all system is at the root of a variety of ills, including low participation, districting that favors incumbents, and the exclusion of key issues from public discourse.

In San Francisco, the new instant runoff system called ranked choice voting did away with the previous system of runoffs. In the November 2005 election for several city offices, turnout rose dramatically compared to 2001, and the city saved $3 million because it was spared a second election. Voter preferences were recorded with more precision; rival candidates could signal their second choices to supporters.

Voting systems do matter immensely. Hill observes that the recent election in Palestine produced a lopsided Hamas legislative victory because of its winner-take-all elements. Hamas won a very narrow plurality of the popular vote, 45 percent to 41 percent for Fatah, but ended up with 58 percent of the seats.

INSTANT RUNOFF VOTING SYSTEMS like San Francisco's have been promoted by activists using popular ballot initiatives. Others look to process reforms in the manner of the Progressive Era. Last November, the privately funded and scrupulously nonpartisan Commission on Federal Election Reform, chaired by Jimmy Carter and James Baker III, issued a report identifying several technical fixes in the hope of breaking through what the commission perceived as a partisan logjam. This is a sequel to the 2001 Carter-Ford Commission, many of whose recommendations found their way into the 2002 Help America Vote Act (HAVA), which was passed with at least the pretense of bipartisanship in the wake of the 2000 debacle.

The latest commission recommendations, 87 in all, include nonpartisan administration of elections, state responsibility for voter lists and registration systems, compatibility among state systems so that most people would register just once in a lifetime, a uniform system for counting provisional ballots, an auditable paper trail for electronic voting machines, restoration of voting rights to ex-felons, and full access for international observers. These exemplary recommendations would certainly help improve American democracy, if that were indeed the goal of both parties.

The commission's most controversial recommendation is a mandatory photo-ID system for voting. The commission contends that systematic outreach by election officials could assure that the system



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would become a tool to increase participation rather than to invite suppression. But the commission could not agree on how to assure that result and gave only the blandest endorsement to the extension of the Voting Rights Act. In its ID proposal, the commission gave exaggerated credence to the standard Republican change of ballot fraud to justify ID requirements that just happen to disadvantage historically suppressed groups.

The commission, diplomatically, does not discuss the elephant in the room (pun intended), namely, systematic Republican efforts to suppress turnout and rig vote counting. It is too tactful to mention the partisan election abuses in Florida and Ohio, the racially targeted purges of voting rolls, the intimidations of "ballot integrity" programs, the invitations to abuse by flawed electronic voting systems produced by companies closely allied with Republicans, or the politicization of the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department. Its posture, that the threats to American democracy are symmetrical and technical, is intended to rekindle bipartisan support for reform.

Despite this tactical courtesy and the immense goodwill toward the idealism of former President Carter, the commission has not been able to jump-start a good-government movement to remedy the mechanical threats to our democracy, much less the partisan ones. Today's political mood is even less receptive to reforms that transcend partisan self-interest than when HAVA was enacted in 2002. Even without deliberate partisan interference, the 2006 election is likely to be more flawed than the elections of 2004 and 2000.

RICHARD VALELLY'S WORK DEMONstrates the fragility of coalitions that have periodically formed to safeguard the full participation of racial minorities. He correctly identifies this effort as a political enterprise, not a technical one. Democratic rights are enlarged and protected when coalitions committed to their enforcement form and persevere. In contrast to the civil rights coalition of 1961-65, the currently dominant racial coalition began to take shape with Richard Nixon's southern strategy in 1968 and culminated with the tainted presidential elections of 2000 and 2004. This governing coalition includes business elites, cultural conservatives, and southern whites, and it has been willing to use a variety of means to suppress black voting, and increasingly to tamper with voting generally.

It is no accident that the suppression of black voting in the late 19th century coincided with elite measures to depress white working-class and immigrant voting, and to substitute supposed expertise for democratic deliberation. "Disenfranchisers [of blacks]," Valelly writes, "wanted to obstruct the electoral participation of poor whites as well as end black voting." Indeed, just as racial suppression is heavily implicated in America's general culture of violence, it is implicated generally in our stunted democracy. If and when a new coalition arises to restore effective voting rights and to enrich democratic participation, it is unlikely to be the consequence of high-minded, nonpartisan or technical reform, but rather of a partisan victory that throws the rascals out. That, in the spirit of Schumpeter, will be how we know American democracy still lives. **TAP**

BOOKS

DIE-HARDS

TAKING CARE: ETHICAL CAREGIVING IN OUR AGING SOCIETY
BY PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL ON BIOETHICS 309 pages, free at www.bioethics.gov

BY DEBORAH STONE

WHEN GEORGE W. BUSH APpointed the President's Council on Bioethics in 2001, he stacked it with conservatives who had already taken stands against abortion, embryonic stem-cell research, euthanasia, and assisted suicide. Nonetheless, I approached the council's sixth report, *Taking Care*, with an open mind after reading a column in *The New York Times* by David Brooks, who described the report as "a rebuke to the economic individualism of the right and to the moral individualism of the left," and an assertion of "mutual obligation." For once, I thought, conservatives and liberals might find common ground.

The report opens with a rich account of the "caregiving crisis" in America, and it was in these passages that Brooks found what he called a "declaration of dependence." A healthy old age filled with tennis and travel, the council warns, is more likely to occur in advertisements for assisted living than in real life. In fact, "the most common trajectory toward death is the path of 'dwindling,' of progressive debility, enfeeblement, and dementia, often lasting up to a decade." As a result, most of us will eventually depend on others for care. And if we think we're going to be able to count on paid caregivers to make up for our smaller, scattered extended families, think again. Home health care is an unattractive field—strenuous work, very low pay, and rarely with health benefits.

But after portraying the rise of dependence and the lack of care providers, the council declares all the related policy issues "beyond the scope of this report" and recommends that the president appoint another commission to study them. Instead, *Taking Care* focuses on choices at the end of life and not surprisingly opposes euthanasia, assisted suicide, and anything that smacks of hastening death for terminally ill patients. What is surprising, however, is just how reactionary the report is. It opposes living wills and aims to reverse the trend toward giving people greater control over their end-of-life care.

That trend goes back to the 1960s, when clinicians and laypeople began to question medicine's drive to keep patients alive as long as possible, even at the cost of painful and ultimately futile treatments. The movement for hospice care as an alternative to dying in hospitals grew from this impetus. In the 1970s, Derek Humphrey's suicide manual, *Final Exit*, became a bestseller because it

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offered the possibility of dying on one's own terms and of choosing an early death over a prolonged period of decline, incapacity, and suffering. Then came the movement for living wills and other advanced directives that allow people to specify their wishes about end-of-life care while they are competent to express them. The prospect of a lingering painful, immobile, demented, or brain-injured phase of life spurred the movement for assisted suicide. Why shouldn't people be able to get help doing what they want to do but can't perform themselves? Or why shouldn't they have help dying more peacefully and less horribly for their families than, say, blowing their brains out with a handgun or jumping off a roof? Together, these four movements—hospice, Hemlock Society, living wills, and assisted suicide—represent a powerful democratic expression of the wish for individual autonomy in old age, chronic illness, and disability.

Taking Care is a sly package. The preface states, "Our purpose is to provide a humanely rich account of the caregiving dilemmas—social, familial, and personal—and to offer some important ethical guidelines for the care of persons who can no longer care for themselves." But actually, the council's main goal seems to be to prevent people from choosing death earlier than medical technology might allow or nature might ordain. Of all the ethical dilemmas in caregiving, the report zeroes in on one—whether it is ever moral to hasten death, one's own or somebody else's. The council's answer is "no." And of all the possible policy questions surrounding care in an aging society, the report addresses only one—advance directives. The council wants to curb their use and have people cede their decision-making power to their caregivers if they become incapacitated.

In its first "recommendation"—really a declaration—the council says, "Euthanasia and assisted suicide are antithetical to ethical caregiving for people with disability ... [and] should always be opposed." The report talks incessantly of the need for "moral boundaries" and for putting certain actions—helping people to die on their own terms—"beyond the pale."



Kiss of Life: Is it ever moral to hasten death, one's own or somebody else's?

Taking Care casts helping people to die as "betrayal" and "abandonment." (These two words appear seven times in the language under the first recommendation; I lost count in the report as a whole.) A caregiver who helps hasten the death of the person she cares for, according to the council, invariably betrays a trust, and probably does so for her own convenience, to end the burdens of caregiving. In the report, merely considering helping another person to die is always cast as a "temptation." Quasi-religious language pervades the report, giving it the feel of a sermon. The council introduces its concluding "moral guidelines" by saying, "We highlight three crucial teachings." Ummm ... of whom?

Nowhere in the report do we glimpse the kind of tragic situations that gave rise to the social movements I mentioned earlier. In those situations, a caregiver who helps carry out a patient's strongly and clearly expressed wishes should be seen as fulfilling a trust, not betraying it. Many people feel that carrying out such wishes requires extraordinary moral courage. When my mother was dying of cancer, even though she had signed Do-Not-Resuscitate/Comfort-Care-Only papers and we'd had explicit discussions about her living will, I feared I wouldn't have the strength simply to sit by her side if she were to have a heart attack. For me, the temptation would have been to call an ambulance.

The most insidious feature of *Taking Care* is its attempt to stem the patient self-determination movement and to undermine the respect for individual autonomy that has been the bedrock of medical ethics—and liberalism. What ties together hospice care, the Hemlock Society, assisted suicide, and living wills is the quest for personal autonomy. But, according to the council, "Self-determination has intrinsic limits in a civilized and decent society. ... Even a competent person's wishes should be limited by such moral boundaries. ... Our caregivers are not obligated to execute our wishes if those wishes seem morally misguided." The council sees itself as the guardian of the moral boundary.

The council does make some concessions toward public uneasiness about heroic, last-ditch medical intervention. Its second recommendation asserts that the goal of ethical caregiving is not to prolong the patient's life but "to benefit the life the patient still has," and its third recommendation states that caregivers have an "obligation to avoid inflicting treatments that are unduly burdensome" or not "efficacious." Despite these concessions to humane standards of caregiving,

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however, the council's overriding message is to reject personal autonomy in end-of-life care by limiting the role of advanced directives.

Here's what the council recommends. First, people who write living wills should be asked to insert a provision allowing their proxy to override their wishes. Second, we should prefer "proxy directives" to living wills: "Instead of attempting to specify *what* should be done, advance proxy directives should specify *who* should make crucial decisions on our behalf." (emphasis added) Third, ethics committees and judges should give less consideration to "what the incapacitated patient would want done, were he now to be consulted in his own case," and more to "discerning what the incapacitated patient now needs in order to serve best the ongoing, if dwindling, life he now has." These decision-makers shouldn't "overvalue 'precedent' autonomy, or past wishes." Fourth, state legislators should "be cautious about putting more state authority and resources behind advance instruction directives." Last, Congress should amend the Patient Self-Determination Act of 1990, which requires hospitals to give patients an opportunity to complete advance directives. The council wants this law to recognize the authority of surrogate decision-makers to act in the best interests of the patient instead of honoring the patients' expressed wishes.

Granted, there are thorny issues in making judgments about what one might want in the future under circumstances one can't possibly imagine. But these recommendations would gut the purpose of advance directives—to strengthen individual autonomy. I can surmise only that the council wants to limit advance directives because so many people use them to ask for help hastening their deaths.

For me and most of the people I know who've carried care responsibilities for dwindling spouses or parents, the most salient ethical dilemma we face is balancing autonomy and care long before incapacitation. How and when should you override someone's wishes not to have care if you believe her health and safety require it?

But this problem never shows up in *Taking Care*, which doesn't engage the real-life dilemmas of mutual dependence and obligation with the same moral passion it lavishes on preventing people from exercising control over their deaths. Conservatives are caught in a strange contradiction. They favor policies that would extend costly medical care at the end of life, while opposing the social policies that would enable many people to afford that care. As a policy analyst, were I to be on a presidential council on caregiving, I'd insist on one overriding moral duty—society's obligation to fund decent care for those who need it and decent pay for those who give it. **TAP**

***Deborah Stone**, research professor of government at Dartmouth College, is the author of* The Disabled State *and* Policy Paradox. *Her next book is* The Good Samaritan's Secret.

BOOKS

RIGHT TO NOWHERE

IMPOSTOR: HOW GEORGE W. BUSH BANKRUPTED AMERICA AND BETRAYED THE REAGAN LEGACY BY BRUCE BARTLETT
Doubleday, 310 pages, $26.00

BY MICHAEL LIND

EVEN BEFORE IT WAS PUBLISHED, Bruce Bartlett's *Impostor* had a dramatic effect: It cost Bartlett his job as a policy analyst at a conservative think tank, the National Center for Policy Analysis (NCPA), based in Dallas. Bartlett, a veteran of the Reagan White House and the elder Bush's Treasury Department, clearly has the courage of his convictions. But those convictions are so extreme that, far from damaging George W. Bush with his critique, Bartlett makes the president look like a moderate.

Some of Bartlett's criticisms hit the mark. In a chapter titled "Is Enron a Metaphor for Bush's Economic Policy?" he argues that Bush-style conservatism is pro-business rather than pro-market: "In reality, the last thing most businessmen want is a truly free market, which would force them to compete and erode their profits. What they really want are subsidies, monopolies, and protection." As an example, Bartlett cites the reimbursement of corporations for the drug benefits they were already providing for employees: "After passage of the legislation, *The Wall Street Journal* reported that General Motors anticipated receiving $4 billion to cover its prescription drug costs. Other big recipients included Verizon ($1.3 billion), BellSouth ($572 million), Delphi ($500 million), U.S. Steel ($450 million), American Airlines ($415 million), John Deere ($400 million), United Airlines ($280 million), and Alcoa ($190 million) ... [T]he effect is to substantially raise corporate profits."

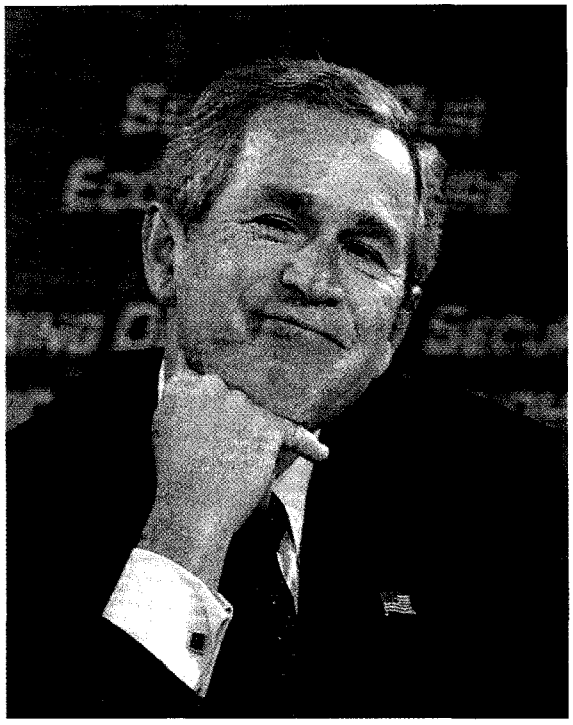
Bartlett praises Bill Clinton for vetoing spending legislation, writing of Bush: "Amazingly, he is the first president since John Quincy Adams to serve a full term without vetoing anything." One of his chapters is called "On the Budget, Clinton Was Better."

Yet the worst thing that Bartlett can say about Bush is that he is really a liberal. "Free marketeers celebrated Bush's renunciation of the Kyoto Treaty on global warming shortly after he took office in 2001," Bartlett writes. "And they cheered when all of the 'midnight regulations' imposed in the last days of the Clinton administration were frozen." Tragically, according to Bartlett, "By the end of 2003, the Bush administration was proudly promoting its imposition of new regulations banning the diet supplement ephedra and protecting consumers from 'mad cow' disease. It also celebrated a 'get tough' policy toward corporate wrongdoers." That's right, Bartlett is criticizing Bush for trying to use government to thwart corporate crime and mad cow disease.

According to Bartlett, Bush has betrayed the Republican Party's commit-

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ment to small and limited government, emulating Nixon, the original opportunistic "big-government conservative," rather than Reagan, Bartlett's hero. Bartlett is candid enough to admit that Reagan failed to bring about the end of big government in America. He includes an appendix showing that tax increases under Reagan neutralized about half of Reagan's tax cuts. Bartlett undermines his case for Reagan further by admitting, "In some ways, increased taxes were always implicit in the Reagan tax cut—and not because of the Laffer Curve. Inflation, which was very high when he took office, automatically raises taxes by pushing people into higher tax brackets. Although Reagan supported 'indexing' to prevent this from happening, he did not want it to take effect until 1984. In essence, he wanted a few years of bracket creep to raise federal revenues even as he was cutting them. The problem was that inflation came down more quickly than anyone thought possible in 1981, thus depriving the government of revenue it had anticipated, which is a key reason why deficits were larger than expected." A strategy worthy of Tricky Dick himself! George W. Bush is no Ronald Reagan, and neither was Ronald Reagan.



What, Me Worry?: Bruce Bartlett wants him to

Reagan is not Bartlett's only example of a principled conservative. Bartlett writes: "Among the strongest Nixon-haters was the ultraconservative John Birch Society, which routinely published attacks on Nixon's liberal policies. Indeed, in 1972 a member of the society, Congressman John Schmitz (R-CA), ran against Nixon for president and garnered more than a million votes, *including mine*" (emphasis added). From Bartlett's perspective, genuine conservatism is better represented by the John Birch Society than by those closet liberals, Nixon and the two Bushes, not to mention Eisenhower, whom the Birchers accused of being a Communist (provoking Russell Kirk, one of the founders of modern conservatism, to quip, "Eisenhower isn't a Communist, he's a golfer").

The truth is that Bartlett is the right's answer to Ralph Nader, Noam Chomsky, and others who denounce all liberals who can actually win elections as conservatives in disguise. But there is no reason to limit the term "conservative" to individuals like Bartlett, who at one point describes himself as a libertarian, and his "traditionalist" allies. Big-government conservatism is common elsewhere in the world; think of British Tory "wets," French Gaullists, and German Christian Democrats. This being the case, Bartlett's premise that the defeat of the small-government right is a victory for the big-government left is simply wrong. In fact, the big-government right has defeated liberals and libertarians alike. Not that big government is all that big in the United States, anyway. Bartlett himself notes that in 2002 the total tax burden in the United States was merely 26.4 percent of GDP, compared to average of 36.3 percent in the advanced economies that belong to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development.

Bartlett concedes wistfully that "the deepest discontent with Bush is among the conservative intelligentsia. Such people tend to be dismissed by political-types as dreamers with no understanding of political realities or getting elected." With good reason, it appears. According to Bartlett, by the end of 2003 the list of "conservative leaders who were becoming actively hostile to Bush [included] direct-mail guru Richard Viguerie, National Taxpayers Union president John Berthoud, New York Conservative Party chairman Michael Long, and Don Devine of the American Conservative Union. I myself basically gave up on Bush in November of that year." To this list, Bartlett adds the criticism of Bush by "former special assistant to President Reagan Doug Bandow, *Reason* magazine editor Brian Doherty, *New York Post* editorial writer Robert George, and the editorial page of the Tampa *Tribune*." Notwithstanding their opposition, Bush was not only re-elected in 2004 but also received a majority in the popular vote as well as the electoral vote.

The combination of middle-class entitlements, corporate welfare, cultural conservatism, and a hawkish foreign policy is a winning formula that has propelled the Republican Party from minority to majority status in the past generation. The basis of this realignment has been the conversion to the GOP of the white working class, which likes New Deal benefits such as Social Security and Medicare and dislikes cultural liberal policies such as gay marriage. These former "Reagan Democrats" have few intellectuals but many voters, while the libertarians, like neoconservatives, have many intellectuals but few voters. As long as Republican politicians can attract voters with a mixture of social conservatism, middle-class entitlement spending, and a perpetual sense of danger from terrorism, they can afford to ignore the complaints of small-government libertarians like Bruce Bartlett, who have nowhere else to go except, perhaps, to the John Birch Society. **TAP**

***Michael Lind**, the Whitehead Senior Fellow at the New America Foundation, is the author of* Made in Texas: George W. Bush and the Southern Takeover of American Politics.

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BOOKS

RICH WORLD, POOR WORLD

THE END OF POVERTY: ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES FOR OUR TIME
BY JEFFREY D. SACHS, FOREWORD BY BONO Penguin Books, 416 pages, $27.95

THE GLOBAL CLASS WAR: HOW AMERICA'S BIPARTISAN ELITE LOST OUR FUTURE—AND WHAT IT WILL TAKE TO WIN IT BACK BY JEFF FAUX
Wiley, 304 pages, $27.95

BY JAMES K. GALBRAITH

JEFF SACHS IS IN MANY WAYS THE Mother Teresa of the economics profession. Like her, he has dedicated his life to the poor. Like her, he is a darling of the compassionate rich. And like hers, his methods engender, among close and thoughtful critics, a certain degree of unease.

In *The End of Poverty*, Sachs makes his case that extreme global poverty can be ended within a generation, raising nutritional standards, health outcomes, and life expectancies; reducing birth rates; and otherwise creating conditions for tolerable life throughout Africa, South Asia, and the most forlorn parts of South and Central America. It can be done, he contends, at a modest cost and in ways compatible with the inexorable spread of market capitalism and globalization. It can be done, mainly, by the actions *of* the rich, *for* the poor. Sachs asks: "Will *we* have the good judgment to use *our* wealth wisely, to heal a divided planet, to end the suffering of those still trapped by poverty, and to forge a common bond of humanity, security, and shared purpose across cultures and regions?" (emphasis added)

The path of wisdom Sachs charts is intensely personal. It is illuminated by the experience of his monumental advisory work, from Bolivia to Poland to Russia to Africa, with firsthand observations also on India, China, and Bangladesh. After his debut as a Harvard wunderkind, Sachs has now spent more than a quarter-century on the road, traveling more than perhaps any economist in all history; his authority rests heavily on the fact that he was there and you were not. From this perspective, *The End of Poverty* is a thoroughly intimidating book.

Sachs' conceptual inspiration is also partly personal: It comes from his wife's pediatric practice. He devotes a chapter to "Clinical Economics," suggesting (very sensibly) that an economist should be prepared to accept complexity, to diagnose differentially, to adapt the treatment to the setting, and to monitor the patient's progress. The problem of extreme poverty is that some countries "fail to thrive." Consciously or otherwise, the metaphor colors his approach. Thus we have Sachs as the traveling doctor: The governments he deals with are anxious parents; the economy is the patient, frightened and hurting, yet capable of recovery if only the proper treatment can be devised and the right medicines delivered on time.

Bolivia's 1986 hyperinflation was the first medical adventure; the cure was found in debt default and in raising the price of fuel, on which the government's tax revenues were based. In Poland in 1989, Sachs championed a fast transition to market prices and again, cancellation of debts. These steps took audacity, and, on the whole, they worked out. (To be clear, Bolivia remained poor, but the hyperinflation stopped in a week.)

Russia was a different story, though. Sachs places the blame on the first Bush administration and on Bill Clinton's unnamed advisers (Strobe Talbot, Lawrence Summers) who supported the corrupt "loans for shares" privatization, in 1995–96. Sachs does name his Harvard colleague Andrei Shleifer, whose self-dealing while a United States Agency for International Development contractor in Russia was "unquestionably a breach of basic professional ethics," but doesn't mention the induced ecological calamity of Mongolia that followed livestock privatization there. In Mongolia, the patient unfortunately died.

As the discussion moves on to China and India, an essential problem surfaces: The doctor doesn't follow his own advice. Differential diagnosis and treatment are forgotten. Sachs's formula worked a few times, and now he wants to apply it everywhere, and to see its controlling hand in every successful case. Thus, he describes the Chinese agricultural reforms of 1979 as "shock therapy *par excellence*," unaware that these were largely a return to practices instituted by Deng Xiaoping in 1961–62, and repressed by Mao Tse-tung at the start of the Cultural Revolution. The real shock therapies in China were the Cultural Revolution and earlier the Great Leap Forward, both disasters.

In India, Sachs cheers for the "reform" process initiated in 1991–92, which has led to a decade of continued growth but also to sharply rising inequalities in one of the world's most unequal countries. Facts that assail the senses of any visitor to modern India—the vast disparities; the catastrophic neglect of roads, rails, and airports; the filth and human chaos of the cities; the power outages and dirty water—all seem secondary in these pages. Like many Indians, Sachs sees salvation in a Great Leap Up to information technology, made possible by communications links that do not require costly physical investments. He does not linger over the thought that cyberdevelopment may be a lousy substitute for the real thing.

This brings us to Africa, to which Sachs turned his attention in 1995. Sachs endorses the "Millennium Development Goals," but as a down payment on an even grander compact to end extreme poverty by 2025. In Africa, this would work mainly by channeling aid and basic technical assistance to villages.

Here, medical and economic considerations merge. As Sachs sees it, Africa's problem lies first of all in the need for capacity to deal with diseases, the most important being malaria and AIDS. And here, in his eyes, the failures of the international donor community are para-

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mount. Of a Malawian proposal to save 300,000 from AIDS, he writes:

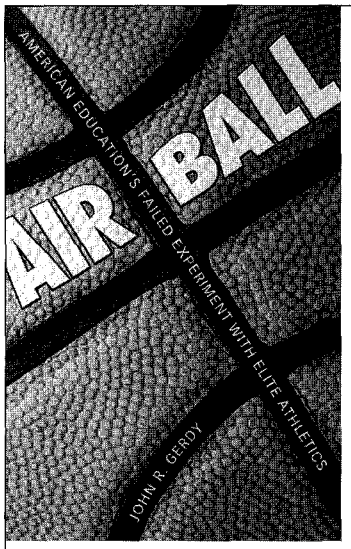
> Yet international processes are cruel. The donor governments ... told Malawi to scale back its proposal sharply ... the draft was cut back to a mere hundred thousand on treatment at the end of five years. Even that was too much. ... After a long struggle, Malawi received funding to save just twenty-five thousand at the end of five years—a death warrant from the international community for the people of this country.

It's maddening, it's heartrending. But it also raises a question: Is Jeff Sachs on a fool's errand? Does the path toward human development really lie through Davos, the boardrooms of the international financial institutions, and the legislative halls? Is it really, mainly, a problem of charity, a few affordable offerings leaving the structures of global finance undisturbed? And if that were so, why, then, has inequality worsened and the plight of the poor grown worse in so many countries that opened themselves to international capital? Can it be that charity has a price, which is playing the game by the global rules? And can it be that these rules—which force poor countries to open markets, cut social and health budgets, privatize power and water, and starve their public investment—in general create more poverty than charity can cure?

One has to ask: Are the problems really so simple, especially in the most unstable, conflict-ridden, desperate continent on earth? Or does development require not only resources but also organization, security, discipline, and the determined use of power? What if, just for example, the armies of "barefoot doctors" Sachs would like to create don't stick around? Absenteeism is a big problem in rural development; successful experiences—in China, in Cuba—teach that the window for "exit" must somehow be closed. Yet Albert Hirschman, who eloquently addressed such issues years ago, isn't in the index to Sachs' book.

Critics of Jeff Sachs fall into two broad groups. Some, like Janine Wedel, whose powerful book, *Collision and Collusion*, documents the Harvard scandals in Russia, doubt his sincerity. Many others see in him a false-flag neoliberal, a good-cop front man for the International Monetary Fund (IMF). As one who admired the young Sachs for scourging the creditors during the Latin debt crisis in the 1980s and the IMF during the Asian crisis of the 1990s, I take a third view: There's a tough Sachs, who sides with debtors against their bankers and with the sick against the drug companies, and he's here in these pages; there's also a soft Sachs, who sells to celebrities, and he's here, too. I believe he did well in Bolivia and Poland, fell into dark company in Russia, and that he does not understand China because it does not fit his theory. As for Africa, I'd judge that the soft Sachs wrote most of that part of the book.

One can only admire *The End to Poverty* for its energy and high aspirations. There is a fine optimism here. There is a powerful appeal to generosity. But to persuade, a book on this scale requires more than faith in the dedication of the traveling doctor. It requires



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American Education's Failed Experiment with Elite Athletics
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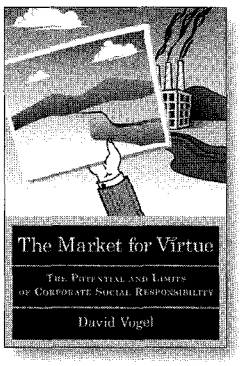
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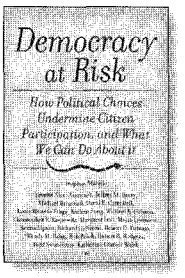
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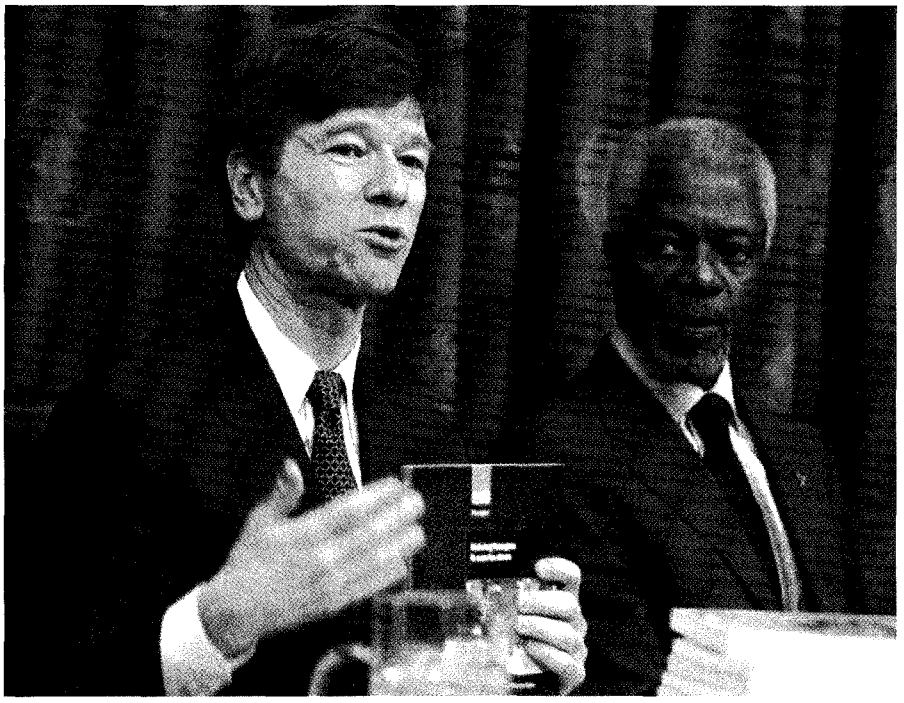
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I'd Love to Change the World: Jeffery Sachs (*left*) with Kofi Annan, January 2005

also confidence in his judgments, a careful treatment of the medical theory to which he subscribes, and serious consideration of critics, of skeptics, and of people who really are expert on the economies and histories of each region. It requires a confidence that, in the end, the personal stories, sweeping generalizations, and soaring exhortations of this book do not inspire.

JEFF FAUX HAS WRITTEN A LESS AMbitious book with a harder edge. Though he titled it *The Global Class War*, Faux is a regionalist. He is focused on a country, Mexico, that Sachs barely mentions and on an institution, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), that Sachs does not mention at all. If Sachs is Mother Teresa, Faux brings to mind Saul Alinsky, with an entirely bracing conviction that the rich are the problem, not the solution, for working people.

NAFTA was a debacle for America's left, as the fight to stop it exposed the higher loyalty of the Clinton administration to Wall Street. In the face of defeat on free trade itself, labor and the environmentalists settled unhappily for "side agreements" that they knew would have little effect. Faux was a prime mover on the losing side, and here he details the struggle and exacts a measure of revenge, well-earned with a decade's hindsight, on those who advanced the cause of NAFTA behind dishonest arguments, especially relating to the large-scale creation of American jobs. Of course, that issue was argued heatedly on both sides. It turns out that U.S. jobs are mostly made or lost at home, and there is very little evidence, 10 years later, that NAFTA made any substantial difference to American employment either way.

NAFTA was not forced on Mexico; as Faux notes, it was largely a Mexican idea. NAFTA helped the neoliberal leadership of Mexico's then-permanent ruling party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, to cast off its historic coalition with labor and the peasantry. In so doing, they brutally destabilized Mexican farmers, forcing large-scale migration to the cities and, of course, to the United States.

From this evidence, Faux constructs his larger charge: that the world is run these days not by national political coalitions but by an international consortium of finance capital—the Party of Davos—whose writ knows no boundaries. The U.S. elites supported Carlos Salinas, he writes, because he was "one of us"—Harvard-educated and a member of the club.

Faux has well understood the new global culture of the bankers and corporate chiefs—though he overestimates their enduring power, which is already under sharp attack in Latin America (including Mexico, which may this year elect a leftist government), Russia, and much of the Islamic world. And yet Faux's argument also shows why NAFTA was the wrong fight. For, given that it served the purposes of Mexico's neoliberal elite, almost every important aspect of NAFTA could have been imposed unilaterally, even if the agreement had never been negotiated. Tariffs for Mexican manufactures flowing north were already low. NAFTA mainly reduced Mexican tariffs on machinery and barriers to the importation of American grain. Salinas could have done this on his own, completing a process that Miguel de la Madrid had started in 1986, by bringing Mexico into the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

So why did Salinas need NAFTA? Apart from political cover, the main reasons were financial and macroeconomic. In 1982, in the face of a devastating crisis, Mexico could not secure adequate U.S. assistance to cope with its inability to service its debt. Years of severe depression resulted—bad for business. The Mexican elites saw that if they were in a free-trade agreement, they would become "too big to fail." In 1995, this judgment was proved correct. And while Mexico still suffered a severe currency crisis, and while the bailout definitely helped the American creditors, stabilization and recovery were nevertheless much more rapid after 1995 than after 1982. This was not a bad thing. Without NAFTA there would still have been a crisis, and the U.S. reaction to it would have been worse.

Now, for Faux as for Mexico, the NAFTA moment has passed, and the new challenge to workers comes from China. Faux writes that in China, "wages are suppressed with bayonets," but this claim would surprise workers in Guangdong or Shanghai, who went there for wages far higher than paid anywhere else in the country. Faux also does not seem to realize that though the best Chinese wages may be one-twentieth of ours in dollar terms, urban workers do not live at one-

JEFF CHRISTENSEN/REUTERS/LANDOV

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twentieth of American working-class standards. For they pay far lower prices for everything: food, clothing, housing, education, and medical care, and they enjoy booming cities that are not slums. It's outside these regions that extreme poverty persists in China, though almost everywhere it's lower than it was a generation back. All in all, the country is a huge exception to the rule of stagnant living standards for ordinary workers. It is cheered by globophiles, hated by globophobes, and understood by neither.

What *is* the Chinese secret? The other day, the distinguished Russian economist S. Menshikov put it to me this way, "Well, it's because they are communists, you see."

More precisely, China has adopted markets *without* capitalism; it has not had broadly open, speculative markets for capital assets and land. The result is that you usually have to make something in order to get rich. So companies produce and produce, flood the markets with goods, accept low profit margins, improve quality, and hope to strike gold by exporting to the West. If they have losses, as they often do, these may be covered by borrowing from China's rotten, state-owned banks, protected by capital control. Workers thrive on the glutted market for goods. Meanwhile, the richer local governments finance themselves with land rent and spend the proceeds on infrastructure at an incredible pace. The system looks like capitalism to the naked eye. But it is not capitalism; it's an outgrowth of what was there before. What was communism has become, one might almost say, Galbraithian—private affluence, with much less public squalor than one finds elsewhere in the Third World.

In an important closing, Faux realizes that North American integration is irreversible. He therefore argues that North America should now aim for a deeper union—something approaching the European model. He looks at modern Europe through rose-colored glasses, seeing there a bastion of social democracy and solidarity that the average resident of, say, the Paris suburbs would not recognize. But the point is correct: A United States of North America, with its openness to expansionary budgets and easy money, and with 69 million Mexican voters, would very likely be more democratic and more prosperous than the present-day European Union, and also not more corrupt than the current crowd in Washington, D.C. Moreover, two aspects of the European model—free migration and a common currency—would help solve many of Mexico's deepest development problems, as the euro and low interest rates have done, remarkably quickly, for Spain.

Of course, to go that far, one would have to protect the interests and address the sensibilities of our neighbors to the north. And to do that, I have long favored naming the new North American money along the lines chosen in Europe. With special deference to our friends in Quebec, it should be called the *Amer*. **TAP**

James K. Galbraith *holds the Lloyd M. Bentsen Jr. Chair in Government/Business Relations at the University of Texas at Austin's Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs.*

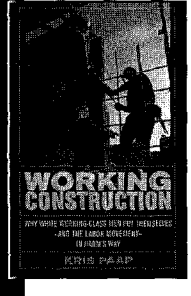
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Bush's Skunktails

BY ROBERT B. REICH

IN CONTRAST TO A PRESIDENT'S COATTAILS THAT sweep his party to congressional victories, skunktails have the reverse effect. Bush's skunktails consist of abuses of power, corruption, and incompetence now so widely recognized that, according to recent polls, those who "strongly disapprove" of his administration now equal those who merely "approve." Because turnout in midterm elections depends largely on intensity of preference, Bush's malodorous tails would seem to bode well for Democrats who need to win six more seats in the Senate and 15 in the House in order to take back Congress.

But there is an asymmetry of consequence between Republican and Democratic skunktails. Even before George W. came to Washington, Republican voters had low expectations of government. Presumably then, the fiascos of Katrina, Iraq, the Social Security drug benefit, the Bush fiscal policy, vote-buying and sweetheart deals with corporations, spying on Americans, Abu Ghraib, and the Dubai port deal, to list only a few of the misadventures of the last five years and three months, have not especially shocked Republicans. They have confirmed established Republican dogma that government cannot do anything well and is not to be trusted. Democratic voters' aspirations for government are higher. Although Democrats have not shared Bush's goals, the overall ineptitude and self-dealing that has marked his efforts may have caused Democratic voters to become more disillusioned about the capacities of government in general, thereby jeopardizing Democratic aspirants for Congress as much as Republican incumbents.

Recent polls from the Pew Research Center seem to confirm this. The public's negative feelings toward Congress are high and strikingly nonpartisan. Unfavorable ratings of both parties are at their highest levels since 1992, and the view of Congress as an institution is at its lowest point in over a decade—47 percent viewing it unfavorably and only 44 percent favorable. This marks a major change from as recently as January 2001, when 64 percent of the public expressed a favorable view of Congress.

Anti-incumbent sentiments are running unusually high this year regardless of party affiliation. Forty-nine percent of registered voters say most members should not be returned to office, up from 38 percent in October 2002. Thirty-six percent of independents say they don't want the incumbent in their district reelected. That's as high a level as it was in October of 1994, just before Congress flipped to Republican control. But disgruntlement also runs high in Democratic ranks even within traditionally Democratic districts. Fully 31 percent of Democrats believe their representative should not be reelected, compared to nearly 20 percent in previous midterms. Only 18 percent of Republican voters say their representative should not be reelected.

More generally, the public has turned even more deeply cynical about government than it was at the start of the Bush administration. Excepting the months immediately following 9-11, confidence in Washington to do what's right "just about always" or "most of the time" has plunged since Bush took over the White House. Only 34 percent of the electorate now takes this positive view, while 65 percent now say they "never" or "only sometimes" trust government to do what's right. (By way of contrast, in 1964, 76 percent of the public trusted government just about always or most of the time, while 22 percent never or only sometimes did.)

Cynicism about government is the single most important attribute of conservative Republicanism. Hopefulness about government's capacity to improve the lives of Americans has been the defining theme of Democrats since Franklin D. Roosevelt. That the Bush administration has succeeded so dramatically in deepening the pool of cynicism will stand as its greatest contribution to the Republican cause, and its most lethal assault on Democrats.

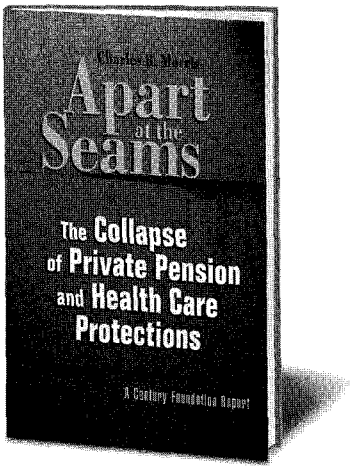
Ronald Reagan told America that government was the problem, but, ironically, his presidency enhanced the stature of his office and of government. Reagan thereby reversed the cynical trend that began with Vietnam and Watergate. By 1988, the public was notably less cynical about government (58 percent trusting it only sometimes or never) than it had been in 1980 (73 percent), marking a significant setback for conservative Republicanism.

Bush will harm a few Republicans this fall—and the cause of active government for years to come.

George W. Bush has not made the same mistake. He has demeaned his office, reduced the capacity of government to govern, and undermined public trust. His skunktails may reach some Republican incumbents next November, but the danger is their stench may be strong enough to extend much farther, and for many years to come. TAP

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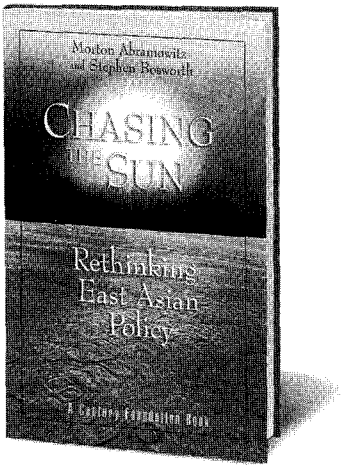
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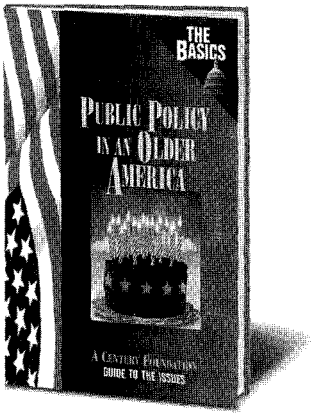
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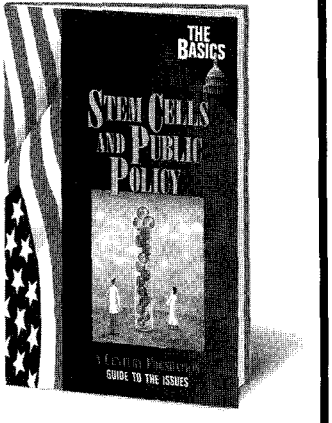
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